



# SERMONS

BY

THOMAS ARNOLD, D.D.



*VOL. I.*

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# CHRISTIAN LIFE.

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## SERMONS

PREACHED MOSTLY IN THE VILLAGE CHURCH OF LALEHAM,

1820—1828.

BY

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*NEW EDITION,*

REVISED BY HIS DAUGHTER

MRS W. E. FORSTER

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# P R E F A C E

BY

THE EDITOR.



IT is now more than half a century since the earliest Sermons in these volumes were preached at Laleham by Dr. Arnold; and thirty-five years have passed since his voice was heard for the last time in Rugby Chapel, on the Sunday before his death. Yet, although Sermons have rarely so long an existence, and although my Father's were written in the midst of a busy life, almost invariably on a Sunday afternoon, in the couple of hours before he went into chapel, and are therefore no elaborate productions, but direct practical addresses to the congregation before him,—I cannot but believe that they will still be read with interest, and that the freshness and force of them will be found still unexhausted.

For some years after his death the Sermons continued to pass rapidly through successive editions, and they have never ceased to have a certain circulation: I am encouraged therefore to hope that

‘But what was it after all which seized and held these three hundred boys, dragging them out of themselves, willing or unwilling, for twenty minutes on Sunday afternoons? . . . We listened to a man who we felt to be with all his heart and soul and strength striving against whatever was mean and unmanly and unrighteous in our little world. It was not the cold clear voice of one giving advice and warning from serene heights, to those who were struggling and sinning below, but the warm living voice of one who was fighting for us and by our sides, calling on us to help him and ourselves and one another.’<sup>1</sup>

Of the six volumes of Sermons, the first four were published by my Father himself; the first<sup>2</sup> volume in 1829; the second,<sup>3</sup> in 1831; the third,<sup>4</sup> in 1834; and the fourth,<sup>5</sup> in 1841: the last two volumes were published by my Mother soon after his death, the Sermons being selected by her from among his MSS., with the counsel and aid of her dear friend Dr. Stanley, the present Dean of Westminster. In republishing them I have made no change whatever, except to omit a course of very early Sermons on the Epistle to the Romans.

<sup>1</sup> ‘Tom Brown’s School Days.’    <sup>2</sup> ‘Christian Life.’

<sup>3</sup> ‘Christian Life at School.’    <sup>4</sup> ‘Christian Life and Doctrine.’

<sup>5</sup> ‘Christian Life, its Course, &c.’

If it should appear at first sight that such small portions of these volumes as are of a controversial character might have been omitted, as referring to what was of only temporary interest, it will be found, I think, that although some of the names and circumstances may belong to a past controversy, the principles discussed are the same which are being discussed daily among us, and belong to the present fully as much as to the past.

It is possible also that some of the Sermons preached soon after Dr. Arnold went to Rugby, which deal especially with Public School life, may now appear to paint its evils in somewhat exaggerated colours: but, besides the interest which attaches to them as ‘the first Sermons of their kind,’ they possess the additional interest, that the difference between his description and the actual state of Public Schools, represents in some degree, undoubtedly, the result of his labours.

I need only say in conclusion, that the titles, both of the volumes and of the separate Sermons, are for the most part not of the author’s own giving; the only volume named by himself is the fourth, ‘Christian Life, its Course, its Hindrances and its Helps,’ and the only Sermons he named are those in the volume entitled ‘Christian Life and Doctrine.’

J. M. F





## P R E F A C E.



THE Sermons contained in this volume are printed exactly as they were preached, with the exception of a very few verbal alterations, and of the addition of about two pages as an introduction to the twenty-sixth sermon. In point of style they are wholly devoid of pretension ; for my main object was to write intelligibly, and if I have succeeded in this, I must be content to be censured for much homeliness, and perhaps awkwardness of expression, which I had not the skill to avoid.

In their matter they have not attempted to enter upon points of criticism, or to engage in any of the more difficult questions of theology. They are directly practical ; but it has been my endeavour in all of them to enforce what may be called peculiarly Christian practice ; that is, such a perfection in thought, word, and deed, as the Spirit of God should inspire to the enlightened understandings and willing hearts of those whom Christ redeemed, and who are now no longer under the law, but under grace.

There is an extreme reluctance amongst many who are very zealous supporters of the outward establishment of Christianity, to admitting its principles in the concerns of common life, in matters belonging to their own trade or

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profession, or above all, in the conduct of national affairs. They will not tolerate its spirit in their everyday practice, but ridicule it as visionary and impracticable. Now if the language of sermons be vague and general; if it do not apply clearly and directly to our own times, our own ways of life, and habits of thought and action, men elude its hold upon their consciences with a wonderful dexterity; and keeping their common practice safe out of the reach of its influence, they deceive themselves by their willingness to hear it, and by their acquiescence, and even their delight in it. It appears to me that a sermon addressed to Englishmen in the nineteenth century should be very different from one addressed to Englishmen in the sixteenth, or even in the eighteenth; and still more unlike one addressed to Greeks or Asiatics in the third or in the first. It should differ according to the great difference of character and habits in the hearers of different ages and different countries: and if this seems no better than a truism, yet the truth which is almost self-evident in theory, has been by no means generally attended to in practice. On the contrary, one sort of phraseology has commonly been handed down in religious compositions from generation to generation; and their language, instead of assimilating itself as closely as possible to that in common use, has studiously preserved a character of its own. But even with regard to Scripture itself, it is surely the spirit of it and not the language, which is of eternal application and efficacy; and that spirit will generally be most effectually conveyed in our writings, through a medium different from that which was originally chosen; because we and the first converts to Christianity are so different in climate,

in national customs and feelings, in our trains of thought, and modes of expression. My object, then, has been to bring the great principles of the Gospel home to the hearts and practices of my own countrymen in my own time; and particularly to those of my own station in society, with whose sentiments and language I am naturally most familiar. And for this purpose I have tried to write in such a style as might be used in real life, in serious conversation with our friends, or with those who asked our advice; in the language, in short, of common life, and applied to the cases of common life; but ennobled and strengthened by those principles and feelings which are to be found only in the Gospel.

I have only further to observe, that the similarity between some passages in these sermons and parts of Dr. Whately's *Essays on the Peculiarities of Christianity*, and on some of the Difficulties in the writings of St. Paul, may render it necessary for me to exculpate myself from this apparent plagiarism. The fact is, that the passages in question were written before I was aware that Dr. Whately had expressed the same sentiments more clearly and more forcibly; and it is a pleasure to me to reflect that we arrived by a separate process at the same conclusions in the first instance, although my views on these points, as on many others, have been confirmed and extended by the communication of his.

RUGBY :  
*February 2, 1829.*



# PREFACE

TO

## THE SECOND EDITION.



IN presenting to the public a second edition of the following sermons, it may not be unfit to notice some remarks which have been made on particular passages in the volume; and, at the same time, to show my reasons for reprinting it, except in one instance, without any alteration.

With respect to its style, I was aware from the first that it was susceptible of improvement;—but I am of opinion, that a composition once completed is rarely changed for the better by subsequent retouching; and that criticisms on an author's style are more capable of benefiting his future writings, than of correcting what he has already written.

In more important points, however, alteration of any thing that had seemed to me justly objectionable, would have been a duty, which, I trust, I should neither have been too proud nor too indolent to perform. Accordingly I have corrected a passage in the sixteenth sermon, in which I had inadvertently limited too closely the meaning

attached in the Scriptures to the expression, ‘the Kingdom of God.’ Feeling strongly the evils of exaggerating the benefits of a mere profession of Christianity, and believing that to be the extreme into which men are, and ever have been, too apt to fall, I have, perhaps, inclined too much to the opposite side; and in striving to enforce the high purity of the Gospel, I may not have sufficiently expressed that indulgent and comprehensive spirit for which it is no less admirable. And I am thankful to have been taught more fully, by this additional experience, the great difficulty of representing faithfully, and in its just proportions, the perfect picture of truth and goodness contained in the Scripture itself;—and how the slightest overcharging of any single feature alters that exact expression of the mind of the Spirit, whose likeness it should be our daily prayer and labour to be conformed to.

A doubt has been suggested to me as to the beneficial tendency of the seventh sermon. It has been said, that whatever be the abstract truth of the sentiments there expressed, they may needlessly encourage an excessive indifference as to variety of religious opinions, and too low an estimate of the advantages of agreement even in the outward forms of Christianity. If, indeed, I could be convinced that the sermon in question contained any thing either untrue, or unfitted to the present times, I should at once have altered or omitted it. No doubt there are many minds which do not require the particular lesson there inculcated:—there are many situations in which it would be impertinent to deliver it. Had it ever been my lot to be the regular minister of a parish, where, in spite of my sincere and active endeavours to benefit

the souls committed to my care, dissent from the Church was a growing evil,—where ignorant and coarse-minded teachers, to gratify their own vanity or sectarian spirit, were continually decrying the ordinances of the Church, and tempting the people to follow them by an exaggerated representation of the truths of the Gospel, even while they did not in substance pervert them : or did I imagine that this present volume were likely to be read principally or generally by Dissenters, then assuredly the seventh sermon would neither have been preached nor published in its present form. But I preached against the particular evils with which my own experience had made me most acquainted ; and I have published what I thought most likely to benefit those among whom the volume would probably circulate. It is still my opinion, that readers in the higher classes of society are inclined to underrate the importance of a Christian unity of spirit, and to overrate the evils of dissent from the Establishment, and to judge of the act of dissent itself too harshly. On this ground I have republished the sermon in question without alteration, not as required by all readers, but as intended to benefit those who I imagine are most likely to read it.

LALEHAM :

*January 22, 1830.*





# PREFACE

TO

## THE THIRD EDITION.



THE present Edition of the Sermons contained in this volume is reprinted without alteration. But with regard to the concluding paragraph of the seventeenth sermon, I wish to copy the following passage from the preface to the second volume of my Sermons, which was published in January last:—

‘In one sermon, the thirty-second, there may seem an inconsistency with the sentiments expressed in the seventeenth sermon of my former volume. If it were so, I should very little regard it; for as it is great presumption in any man to think himself so certainly right in all his opinions, as to refuse to reconsider them, so it is great weakness or great dishonesty to conceal such alterations in them, as further inquiry may have wrought. But in the present instance, the difference between the two sermons in question is no more than this; that what I considered in the former volume as by far the best and happiest alternative of the two ways of making nominal and real

Christianity more generally identical, I have now dwelt upon, not only as the best, but as the one which we must assiduously labour in our practice to carry into effect. The Church of Christ was originally distinct from the National Society, to which its members belonged as citizens or subjects. It was promised that these National Societies should become Christian Societies ; and so they have become, but, unfortunately, not so entirely in spirit as in name. Hence, many good men wish the two Societies to be again distinct : believing that the Church is more likely to be secularised by the union, than the nation is to be Christianized. And, doubtless, as things are and have been, this belief has too much to warrant it. But, on the other hand, as things ought to be, and as I believe they yet may be, the happier alternative is the one to be looked to ; namely, the carrying forward God's work to its completion,—the making the kingdoms of the world become the kingdoms of Christ ; not partially or almost, but altogether, in spirit and in truth. It is certainly very bad to remain as we are ; and to go back to the original state of the Church would be most desirable, if we could have no hope of going on to that glorious state of perfection for which Christ designed it. But this hope is too precious to be lightly abandoned ; and our present state is a step to something better, however little we have chosen to make it so ; the means are yet in our hands, which it seems far better to use even at the eleventh hour, than desperately to throw them away.'

RUGBY :

*September, 1832.*

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## SERMON I.

‘ *WHAT MUST I DO TO BE SAVED?*’

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*What must I do to be saved?*

IN speaking to a number of persons of different ages, and infinitely different characters, it cannot be easy to address them in language which shall be equally suited to them all. If we speak to them as to advanced Christians, who have begun in earnest, and are steadily pursuing their way to heaven, we must needs use a style which many of them will be utterly unable to understand. Or if, on the other hand, we address them as children in Christian knowledge, as requiring to be taught the first principles of the wisdom of the Gospel, many of them who are themselves further advanced will be somewhat impatient of these elementary truths; and will say that they are weary of hearing once again what they have already heard so often and know so well. Were our congregations indeed such as they ought to be, there would be no difficulty; for as all of us have been acquainted with the name of Christ from our infancy, as we have been baptised in His name, and have been all accustomed more or less to attend His worship, we ought all to be familiar both in word and deed with the beginnings of the Gospel, and to require only exhortations to persevere in our course, and those fresh openings of heavenly

knowledge which a good man will ever be gaining till he arrives at his last perfection in the kingdom of heaven.

But it is quite needless to say that our congregations are not such as these; but that a large proportion of them for ever require to be told afresh what is the very foundation of a Christian life. Nor indeed is it unprofitable even to the best of us to be brought back from time to time to these first elements, that we may see whether or no our foundation does stand sure, and that we may refresh our feelings of thankfulness to God, and of humiliation for ourselves. The Israelites, when they were become a great nation, and were entered into the enjoyment of Canaan, were commanded to come before the Lord with the first fruits of their rich land, and then to look back upon their poor and humble origin.<sup>1</sup> They were to say, 'A Syrian ready to perish was my father, and he went down into Egypt and sojourned there with a few, and became there a nation, great, mighty, and populous.' Even so may the very best among us, while regarding with gratitude to God any progress which they may have made in goodness, lay the offering of these their fruits of righteousness before the throne of God, and say, 'I was by nature and inclination a sinner ready to perish for ever;—and lo! my sins have been washed away, and I am purified by the blood of Christ, and born anew by His Spirit; and whereas I was a child of wrath, I am now the reconciled child of God, and an heir of His everlasting kingdom.' So that none need refuse to go back with me to the question in the text—the question of one who was indeed thoroughly ignorant, but was so far happier than many amongst us, that he had been alarmed into a desire to learn something. He witnessed the earthquake, he saw the prison doors burst open, yet the Christians who were in the prison seemed to feel no fear, but had just been singing praises to their God,

<sup>1</sup> Deut. xxiv. 1–10.

as if they, let happen what would, could not fail to be peaceful and happy. So he ran to them as to persons who could make him safe and happy too ; and although he did not know all the danger in which he was, nor all the deliverance that was prepared for him, yet God made his little to be much, and he who thought chiefly of deliverance from the earthquake, or a relief from his fears of bodily evil, was allowed to hear of the redemption of his soul, and of salvation from every fear which might make death most terrible.

Now we know, probably, even the most ignorant of us, much more than the Philippian gaoler when he asked trembling, 'What must I do to be saved?' we know, I say, more than he did, but we have not the earthquake before our eyes, to fill us with his earnest desire to escape from danger. And *there* is, and ever will be, the difficulty: it is still the same language which tempted Eve to her ruin that the Devil whispers every day to the hearts of thousands to tempt them to their ruin also. The serpent said unto the woman, 'Ye shall not surely die.' And so the devil teaches our hearts to say to us now, 'We shall not die soon,' or, 'We shall not die eternally,' or, 'We need not think about death now.' Those who have read the story of the great Plague of London in 1666, or that of Florence in 1348, or of any other seasons of great pestilence which have visited countries possessing a knowledge of the Gospel, may remember the striking effect produced upon men's minds by those sweeping calamities. It seemed as if all were awakened from a dream, had turned away from acting an unreal part, and were at once suddenly sobered and made in earnest. There was a separation broadly and strongly marked between the good and the wicked, like that which will take place in another world. Those who knew what would become of them after death, but had been playing away their lives in the usual follies of man-

kind, all began now to crowd the churches, to pray with most hearty sincerity, and to look upon sin in its true light, as their worst and most deadly enemy. The unbelievers, on the contrary, those who had hardened their hearts effectually by a course of godless living, they too threw aside the covering which they had merely worn for the sake of the world's opinion, and began to serve *their* master, the Devil, without disguise. Thus the churches were thronged in one place, whilst every sort of abominable wickedness, open blasphemy, lewdness, rioting, robbery, and murder, were practised without restraint in another. In short, the servants of God and of Satan took each their part openly, and few, if any, held a middle course between them. But as the Plague grew less fatal, this middle course began again to be followed by far the largest portion of those who had lately quitted it. The churches were less crowded on the one side, the voice of riot and blasphemy was heard less loudly on the other; those who had been good became cold and unfruitful; those who had been scandalously wicked became decent. So both met each other half way, and mixed in that mass of general society, which cheats so many of its members by its smooth outside and by the numbers which belong to it,—as if that could not be so evil which pretends to love good, nor so dangerous, in which so large a proportion of mankind are contentedly walking.

What we see on a large scale in seasons of great public calamity, often takes place on a small scale with private individuals. The sickness or death of a friend, the loss of their own health, some wonderful escape from danger, or some bitter disappointment in worldly matters, often turns men in haste to God, by simply opening their eyes to the real state of things around them. These act like the earthquake, and drive men to cry aloud, 'What must I do to be saved?' But will they never turn to God

willingly? Will they never give Him the sacrifice of a free and happy spirit, not bowed down by sickness, not made sorrowful and sober by misfortune,—but brought to God by the sunshine of His earthly blessings, and led to ask of Him for some greater blessings still than those which they now enjoy? When we talk of the sorrows and cares of life, they who have tasted little of either, will think that what they hear does not concern them. When we talk of the uncertainty of death, we but tempt what I may call the gambling spirit in human nature, which delights in running a hazard, even though the chances be against them. They know that death sometimes visits the young, but they know also that such visitations are rendered more striking because they are somewhat uncommon, and they think it not unreasonable to calculate that they themselves shall not be subject to them. I would rather say, ‘You have tasted as yet only the sweetness of the world; and although you will certainly taste of its bitterness too, yet very likely the sweet may be still more, perhaps much more, than the bitter. You are young, and although death is ever uncertain, yet I grant that in the common course of nature many years will probably pass before it visits you. But will you wait to be driven to the altar of God? Will you not turn to Him in your season of youth and happiness, and love Him as He has loved you? Or will you do that to Him which, if practised towards a parent or friend, you would confess to be the extreme of baseness—neglect and grieve Him so long as you are prosperous, and only run to Him in your hour of need, to beg Him to relieve you?’

But then if this sort of language should have any effect upon the mind, the Devil is not slow to prompt a way of escaping from it. We are answered by the question, ‘Why! are we not serving God already? What can be our fault or our danger, believing in the Scriptures, and

leading an innocent life in the common employments and amusements of our age and station?' So it seems we cannot yet bring them to put to themselves that question which is likely to bring about most happily its own answer, 'What must I do to be saved?' They that see are blinded,<sup>1</sup> because seeing in their own conceits, they never come to Christ to ask of Him the means to see clearly. The fault and the danger of such persons is, that their nature is neither changed nor changing,—that they do not live by faith in the Son of God,—nor are led constantly by His Spirit. Nay, do not the very words of being led by the Spirit of God seem to them wild and foolish? I know very well that many have *talked* of being led by the Spirit of God, who were in fact never led by Him; but I am sure that no Christian *was* ever led by Him, without some thoughts and some prayers too for His leading; that none were ever sanctified by the Holy Ghost, who could practically use the language of the ignorant disciples of John in the Acts of the Apostles, 'We have not so much as known whether there be any Holy Ghost.'<sup>2</sup> Their fault and their danger is, that Christ is not their bread of life,—that they do not deny themselves, that they do not love God more than their pleasure, nor love their neighbour as themselves. Their fault and their danger is, that they are not bringing forth the fruit of Christian work; that they are not growing in goodness by a constant struggle with their natural faults and bad tempers, and a constant prayer for help to Him who can alone give them victory. Their fault and their danger is, that they care for the opinion of the world in matters of moral conduct, merely because it is the opinion of the world, without distinguishing when it agrees with the judgment of Christians and when it does not. Thus they form their lives by a crooked rule; because, valuing the opinion of the world, they naturally

<sup>1</sup> St. John ix. 39.<sup>2</sup> Acts xix. 1-7.

act according to it; for not one man in ten thousand has strength enough to forfeit worldly honour, if he has been trained up from his youth to think it of the highest value. Their fault and their danger finally is, that they are living here as if they were never to live anywhere else; that they are not thinking of the great and real manhood to which they are every day fast growing up; that they are not learning the character which can alone fit them to be citizens of heaven.

Such is unhappily the case with thousands: but how can they be persuaded to believe it and to feel it? How can *they* be raised to the excellence of the Gospel standard, who never study that Gospel? How can they be persuaded to be dissatisfied with their own progress, to whom self-examination, or any anxious watchfulness over their characters, is a thing unknown? St. Luke says in the Acts of the Apostles, 'that as many as were ordained to eternal life believed.'<sup>1</sup> What think we does he mean by those 'ordained to eternal life'? Those doubtless whose hearts God had mercifully saved from our three great dangers, dull and obstinate hardness, utter lightness and thoughtlessness, and carefulness about earthly things only. If they were without these things, the seed might find its way into their hearts, and grow up, and bring forth fruit; but on the hard road side, or the shallow stony soil, or the foul and choked up mass of weeds and briars,—and how large a proportion of human characters are represented by some one or other of these images!—it will ever come to nothing. Knowing that this is so, with all past experience and all our knowledge of mankind actually as they are, we might be almost tempted to sit down in despair, and cease to call on those who we feel morally certain beforehand will refuse to heed the call. But so did not Christ Himself, who was pure from all spot of sin; much less then

<sup>1</sup> Acts xiii. 48.



must those who are sinners themselves be impatient of the hardness and impenitence of their brethren. We must not be weary in well doing, we must labour, all of us who are Christians indeed, to aid in the first great work of the Holy Spirit, to try and convince the world of sin ;<sup>1</sup> that little part of the world, I mean, with which we each have to do in our daily living, and whom our words, and our lives agreeing with our words, may possibly influence. To preach the Gospel in one sense, that is, to preach it publicly in the Church, is the business indeed of the Christian minister only ; but to preach it by his daily talking and daily acting, to help forward Christ's kingdom in his own household and neighbourhood, this is the work of all Christ's soldiers, in this sense we are all His ministers, and necessity is laid upon us all, yea, woe is unto us if we preach not the Gospel ; in season and out of season,—with the same earnestness that we would push any favourite scheme,—always watching for an opportunity to recommend it, and only forcing ourselves to keep it sometimes out of sight, lest an unwise zeal should spoil its own endeavours.

The point to which every one who is saved must be brought at some time or other of his life,—that point to which we should strive to bring all those who have not yet reached it,—is to have the feeling expressed in the words of the text, 'What must I do to be saved?' Let a man once be thoughtful about himself,—let him look to his end, and to what comes after death, and feel that he is daily fitting himself according to his conduct for heaven or for hell, and we then must acknowledge the first work of the Spirit in his heart, and may hope that He who has begun it will also complete it to the day of Jesus Christ ;<sup>2</sup> that is, that He will make the man better and better, till he stands before the judgment-seat of Christ. Will all

<sup>1</sup> St. John xvi. 8.

<sup>2</sup> Philip. i. 6.

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those who love their Saviour make their hearty prayers to Him that He will open the eyes and soften the hearts of those who have not yet truly turned to Him ; and that His word spoken in this church to-day may not return utterly void, but may touch some one or two hearts at least, through His blessing who alone can make it prosper in the thing whereunto He sends it ?

## SERMON II.

‘WHAT MUST I DO TO BE SAVED?’

2 COR. v. 17.

*If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.*

I CONCLUDED my sermon last Sunday with dwelling upon the necessity of every man's being brought to say in earnest, ‘What must I do to be saved?’ I said that if we could be brought to ask this question sincerely, it was one which would be almost sure to find its own answer. There is indeed a great deal of ignorance of the Gospel in the world; but it is generally an ignorance which the least desire for knowledge would remove. We are not in danger of going to false religions for counsel or for comfort; but of not seeking any counsel or comfort at all. Still perhaps the way may be smoothed to some one, if it be laid down clearly before him; if I state from this place just what I should advise any person who came to me privately, expressing a desire to save his soul, and asking for directions to put him and to keep him in the right way.

First of all it may be right to mention that anxiety for the state of one's soul may be equally real, and yet show itself in different persons in a very different manner. I believe that many good people have been very angry with

themselves because they did not weep for their sins, and feel that lively grief which we read of so often in the Scriptures as accompanying repentance. Indeed, we are apt to set too high a value upon tears as a proof of feeling; and often to think a person cold and hard-hearted because he cannot shed them freely in seasons of his friends' sorrow. But we ought to know or to recollect that tears are very much a matter of bodily constitution; and that while they flow from some persons readily, nothing can ever draw them from others. In these things also a great deal depends on climate and natural character. The people of warm countries, like Judæa, display all their feelings in a very lively manner;—they scream, or wring their hands, or weep, on occasions which, to the natives of colder countries, seem trifling. We, on the contrary, are accustomed to laugh at such lively signs of emotion, and think it more becoming to suppress them. We thus gain a habit, by which we are far less apt to have strong bodily feelings; and it would often be as impossible for us to weep at anything that pained us, as it would be for a native of a warm country to forbear from weeping. It is of no use, therefore, to examine nicely into the vehemence or soberness of our feelings, whether of joy or sorrow, of hope or of fear, nor should any one think himself not in earnest because he cannot pass sleepless nights or shed floods of tears for the sinful state in which he has been living.

Connected with this subject, and of even greater importance, are the notions which people sometimes entertain of a sudden change to be effected in themselves at some one particular time, after which they shall have different feelings from those of their former lives, and the Spirit will have an undoubted mastery over the flesh. I am afraid that many of my hearers will be more inclined to laugh and sneer at what they call sudden conversions,

than to expect such a thing too anxiously in their own cases : and certainly their chance of any conversion at all, either sudden or gradual, is far less than that of others, who too eagerly, or if you will, superstitiously, look for more than they can reasonably expect to find. The truth is, I imagine, that most men who have ever become Christians in earnest, can look back upon some one part of their life as on what I may call the crisis of their character, when the change in their principles and conduct first began. And it is often the case also, that they can remember some particular circumstance which first led to this change ; something happening to themselves or their friends, or it may be some particular conversation, or sermon, which struck them unusually, and produced a lasting impression on their minds. But those must be persons of rare happiness, who can recollect that the improvement in their characters was very great all at once ; in whom it was not interrupted very often by periods in which they grew worse rather than better, and whose feelings towards God were such as to prove that the Spirit had securely gained the victory over the flesh. I do not mean to deny that there have been such instances ; I only mean to say that they are cases of such extraordinary happiness, that no man has the least right to expect them for himself. The change, indeed, from what we are by nature to the full growth of Christian holiness, is something almost beyond measuring ; nay, the change of principle from the common lives of worldly men to that even of a young and imperfect Christian, is so great as to deserve the name of a second birth ; but that the change of conduct, and still more of feeling, will be anything nearly so great within a short time, I think our experience in general cases is far from proving.

I will suppose then that a man is roused sincerely to ask the question, 'What must I do to be saved?' and

wants some plain and particular directions to serve as his answer. The first rule then to be given is, *to be instant in prayer*. The sense of his own spiritual wants once awakened should naturally urge him to fly to the Father of spirits for relief. The Gospel tells us, that we have an approach to the Father through Jesus Christ. Now this, like the other truths of the Gospel, passes off lightly from the careless ear: but when we have once begun to think about our souls, then we begin to learn its value. I have very often been surprised to hear people talk of the miserable state of the Heathen, because from their ignorance of a Saviour they could never go to their gods with confidence and comfort. It were much more true to say, that their state was miserable because they did go to their gods with confidence and comfort, and felt no want of a Saviour. Our eyes must be widely opened to our real condition, before we can possibly value the peace that is purchased for us by the blood of Christ. But one who has really become anxious about himself, and is aware of his own evil nature, finds the very help that he needs, when he is told that for him, weak and unworthy as he is, Christ laid down His life, and that, through that sacrifice, his pardon is already sealed with God, and is ready to be issued to him the instant that he has learnt to feel his need of it. We might say to such a man, ‘If you are indeed in earnest, draw near unto God without fear; you are pardoned already for Christ’s sake; be sure, therefore, that God loves you enough to give you His Holy Spirit, and to make you that new creature which you wish to be. Pray in the name of Jesus Christ, that the promise of His Spirit may be fulfilled to you, to guide you safely on your way to heaven.’ With the practice of prayer, I should earnestly recommend the use of some book of devotion, like Jeremy Taylor’s ‘Holy Living and Dying,’ or Bishop Wilson’s ‘Sacra Privata;’ some book which will give us heads for self-

examination, sometimes divided according to the days of the week ; which will furnish us besides with short prayers, and will make us acquainted with the feelings and reflections and resolutions of good men, who have gone through the very self-same struggle with ourselves. Books of this kind, too, are sure to furnish us ready to our hands with the very passages of the Scripture on which we can dwell most profitably.

It may be said, Is not the reading of the Scripture itself better than anything? To which I answer, that most certainly it is to those who know how to use it ; but that I greatly doubt whether a person, beginning for the first time in his life to think seriously about himself, would understand at once how to use it ; and whether it would not be more useful to him to have those passages ready picked out for him, as they are commonly in books of devotion, which are most suited to his present wants. If I might say what larger portions of the Scripture seem to contain, within a short compass, most of that knowledge which may make us wise unto salvation, I should be inclined to fix on the conversation of our Lord with His Apostles on the evening on which He was betrayed, as contained in St. John's Gospel, from the 13th to the 17th chapters ; on His conversation with Nicodemus, in the 3rd chapter ; on the 13th and 25th chapters of St. Matthew ; on the 12th of St. Luke ; and on the different chapters in St. Matthew and St. Luke, which contain the sermon on the mount. To these I would add, from the Epistles, those of St. Paul to the Ephesians and Philippians, and the fourth and fifth chapters of his second Epistle to the Corinthians ; together with the first Epistle of St. Peter, and the first of St. John. These seem to me to contain what persons of every age and condition ought to find alike profitable. But for persons of higher condition, both men and women, I would urge, almost above all other places of Scripture,

the frequent reading of the fifth chapter of Isaiah, and of the parable of the rich man and Lazarus, in the 16th chapter of St. Luke. They would there learn, what of all things they most need to remember, with what heavy judgments God threatens the common careless life of selfish indulgence, in which so many are passing their time so securely. 'Son, remember that thou in thy life-time receivedst thy good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things; but now he is comforted, and thou art tormented.' These are words which should be continually sounding in the ears, not of those only who are commonly called rich, but of all who are tasting every day the comforts of life, who never know what it is to want any of those things which they can reasonably wish for. Bitterly indeed and for ever shall we be tormented, if our chief thought in life is how we may live comfortably; if we ever lose sight of the great truth of our condition, that our rest is not to be sought for here, and that every man and every woman, from the time that they can distinguish between good and evil to that when their faculties fail them from old age, are bound to labour constantly in the service of their Master, Christ; and that not the greatest man living has any more right than the meanest to live to please himself, or to indulge in any more amusement, in any more pleasures, than what he may honestly judge to be needful to keep himself strong and active and cheerful for his Master's work. Within these limits God gives us all things richly to enjoy, and our enjoyment is sanctified by our confidence that He is well pleased to grant it to us. Beyond this mark, and when enjoyed not as refreshments but as the object of our lives, they become fraught with danger; and are exactly those good things which, if we receive, we have no other good things to look for: 'Now he is comforted, and thou art tormented.'

But to return to my more particular subject. By reading



these and other similar passages of the Scripture, by the use of such books of devotion as I spoke of, and by frequent prayer, a man will soon learn to regard his conduct with very different eyes from what he used to do; he will be trying to bring it in all points to agree with the Gospel pattern. In this stage of things comes an evil which we should earnestly strive to avoid, because it furnishes the enemies of Christ with a handle against the Gospel, although he must be rarely favoured by the grace of God who does not in some degree fall into it. It is well known, even to a proverb, that men, when beginning anything that is new to them, are apt to practise it somewhat too violently. So it often happens that persons new to the faith of Christ are,—not too thoughtful and too zealous, for that they cannot be,—but too scrupulous, and too little inclined to make allowance for others. They would be perfect Christians all at once, which is impossible; and they catch too hastily at some trifling outside points, which may, perhaps, belong to the perfect Christian character, and at any rate are not unbecoming in it, but which are very unbecoming when worn by those who are as yet only children in Christ. It is like a boy trying to be manly by assuming the dress, and imitating the manner of a grown-up person, while he has no more than the understanding of a boy. Here, then, we should carefully study the frequent exhortations in the Gospel to humility, the commands not to judge our brother, the warnings not to look upon ourselves as holy and marked out from the profane world, such as we find in the parable of the Pharisee and Publican. If we are perfectly charitable to others, our scrupulousness towards ourselves will be regarded even by the world with respect rather than with hatred; and though it may affect our own personal comfort, and may not be consistent with the highest wisdom, yet I confess that I think it is an error on the safe side, and that it is better to be too scrupulous than too presuming.

It remains only to speak of one other temptation that is sure to beset every man who has entered upon a Christian course of life, and which has succeeded in ruining thousands. The first feelings of him who turns in earnest to God are, of necessity, highly raised, and exceedingly delightful. We have been allowed to catch a glimpse of heaven; we have been with Christ on the Mount, and have seen His glory, and have cried out in our joy, ‘It is good for us to be here.’ But we must come down again to continue our journey through the wilderness: in other words, we must go through the common duties and concerns of life, and heaven will still be at a distance from us. Then it is that we grow weary of well doing; that our feelings, from being sober, become cold; that earthly things rise again into importance, and very often end by bringing us back to them again altogether, and making us forget our Saviour, whom we so lately promised to follow. Here, then, is the need for watchfulness; and we should do well, when our spirit is most willing, to remember that our flesh is weak, and that sleep will steal upon us in spite of all our lively feelings, if we do not strive against it by constant prayer and sober watchfulness. It is wise, therefore, to begin a Christian course sincerely, but quietly and soberly; to be not too hasty in endeavouring to reach a very high pitch at first, but to regulate our strength, that it may last out through our whole journey. Leave off at once every known sin;—that is the first step, and without that we do nothing; then be diligent and honest in the duties of your calling, striving to grow in humility and in love to God and to man. If you go on with prayer and watchfulness, be not afraid that you will not reach in time the highest point of Christian perfection,—‘We all beholding, as in a glass, the glory of the Lord, are turned into the same image, from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord.’<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> 2 Cor. iii. 18.

## SERMON III.

*THE CORRUPTION OF HUMAN NATURE.*

GENESIS viii. 21.

*The imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth.*

BODILY sickness makes itself so clearly felt, that a sick man seldom requires to be convinced that he is unwell, although it may not always be easy to persuade him to take the proper remedies. It does, however, sometimes happen, that a disease is working secretly within us, and that it is more visible to others by some of its symptoms, than it is perceptible to ourselves from any actual pain or indisposition which we feel. In such a case it is clearly needful to awaken the patient to a sense of his danger, in order that he may take proper precautions against it ; and if it is not always prudent to make him aware of its full extent, it is only because fear in bodily sickness is often as fatal as disease ; and a man may do himself more harm by fancying himself in a desperate state, than he could receive good from any increased care of himself which he might be prevailed upon to take in consequence of his fears.

But if in every illness we were certain of recovering, provided we took care of ourselves and duly followed the advice of our physician, then there could be no risk in telling us the real state of our case, because the knowledge would only frighten us usefully ; it would only so far

frighten us as to make us careful and complying, because we should know that we should certainly die if we were not so, and should certainly get well if we were so. It would then be a real kindness to impress on a friend as strongly as possible every particular symptom of his danger ; to tell him how other persons had died of the same complaints by not attending to them in time ; to assure him, that however blind he may be to his own condition, it is clear to every one else that disease is actually making progress within him, and that it will soon, in all probability, be beyond the power of medicine to check it. It would be our duty, I say, thus to frighten a man, if it were certain that his recovery was within his own reach, if he would but exert himself ; that the skill of his physician would certainly be able to cure him, if we could but persuade him to follow its directions.

Now, then, my brethren, this *is* actually the case with the sicknesses of our souls. They are dangerous, most dangerous, if we do not perceive them, and strive against them ; and we are certain of recovery if we can be prevailed on to take proper precautions against them. There is a course of treatment, which will certainly succeed if we practise it ; and there is a great Physician, whose skill can certainly overcome the most dangerous symptoms, if we will but consent to follow His guidance.

This, then, is the reason, why a Christian minister is so often obliged to point out to his hearers the sinfulness of man's nature, and to return again and again to the subject. Of course it cannot be a pleasant subject, any more than we like to be told that we are looking ill ; we would much rather think well of ourselves, we would much rather fancy that all is going right within us, and that there is no necessity for our alarming ourselves. But though not a pleasant subject, it is a very useful one ; not the less so, because we are so unwilling to attend to it.

Studying the life of Christ, and living by His Spirit, our eyes will open more and more ; our notions of duty will rise higher and higher, still keeping above our practice, even though that be continually growing purer and better too. Added years will then, indeed, bring added wisdom, till if our life is spared to the full term of the age of man, we may be so ripe for the kingdom of God, as to seem only to be transplanted into it in the course of nature, as being grown to too great a height in goodness to remain any longer in the nursery of this world.

It is repeated often, because there is for ever fresh need of it; and because unwelcome truths require to be brought frequently before our minds, that they may at some time or other find us in a disposition to receive them. May God grant that we may be in such a disposition this day: and may his Holy Spirit work effectually in the hearts of us all, that whatever is spoken according to His word may bring forth fruit unto life eternal, both in those who hear it, and in him who utters it!

‘The imagination of man’s heart is evil from his youth.’ So it was said by our Maker more than four thousand years ago; and it has been true ever since, down to this very hour. It is not only that we have something bad in us by nature, as well as something good, and that the bad under unfavourable circumstances often gets the better of the good; but there is so much more bad than good in us, that we should certainly go wrong if left to ourselves, and that the bias of our nature to evil is so strong, that it can only be corrected by changing the very nature itself; or, in the words of Scripture, by being born again of the Spirit. It would be in itself, I think, a proof of the badness of our nature, that so few men turn out well, in comparison with those who turn out ill; and much more, when the experience of all those who have become good can inform us, that they have continually been engaged in a painful struggle; that if they have abated their efforts and their watchfulness, they have found themselves going backwards instead of forwards: in short, that the current of their disposition sets towards evil; and that, to arrive at goodness, they must work all the way against the stream.

But in order to clear our notions about this point, we must understand what we mean by evil. I am very far from thinking, that all sorts of evil are natural to man; malice is not so; deliberate cruelty is not so; falsehood, for its own

sake, is not so. There are many virtues which are more common than the contrary vices; and therefore it would not be true to say that man is wholly inclined to evil, and wholly turned away from good. But everything is properly called good or evil, according as it answers or defeats the purpose for which it was made. For example, we admire the flowers and flowering shrubs in our gardens; we cultivate them carefully, and think them well worth the room which they occupy, because they were made only to be beautiful to the eye, and we expect, therefore, nothing more of them. But with a fruit-tree the case is different. An apple-tree in blossom is one of the most beautiful sights in a garden; yet if we have a tree which only makes a good show of blossom, and bears no crop of fruit, we think it a bad *apple-tree*, and should soon be inclined to cut it down. We do not rest satisfied with the beauty of the blossom; a fruit tree ought to bear fruit, and if it does not do that, it is a bad one of its kind. Now, then, what were we made for, and what may be expected of us? We were made for our Maker's glory, after His own image, that we should make His will the rule of our lives, and His love and anger the great objects of our hope and fear; that we should live in Him, and for Him, and to Him; as our constant Guide, and Master, and Father. If we answer these ends, then we are good creatures; if we do not, we are bad creatures; nor does it matter how many other good or amiable qualities we may possess, like the blossoms and leaves of a barren fruit tree; we are bad of our kind if we do not bring forth fruit. Now instead of living to God, we by nature care nothing about God; we do not seek to please *Him*, but ourselves or our friends; we do not make His will the rule of our conduct, but we follow either our own inclinations, or the opinions of other men; we live, in short, as if we had made ourselves, and not as if God had made us. This is the corruption of nature, which

makes us evil in the sight of God; which makes the imagination of our hearts in His judgment to be evil from our youth. And from this great evil the whole of our life becomes disordered; the main-spring, which should keep us right, is broken: we are apt to mistake, in many instances, evil for good, and good for evil; we do not see how we ought to settle the claims of our several duties upon us, and we are not sensible of the sin of wasting our time, or misspending our talents, because we lose sight of our Maker, to whom we ought to be accountable for both. And when we consider that this life is but the childhood in which we are to be trained up to the manhood of eternal life; that we are to learn here the character of the inhabitants of heaven, in order to be fit to take our places hereafter amongst them; it is manifest, that he who lives to himself and to his friends, instead of to God, is doing nothing at all to fit himself for heaven, and that he is neglecting the very main purpose for which he was sent into the world. Just in the same way, a boy who takes no pains to improve himself and to gain the knowledge which is to be useful to him in after life, is wasting his childhood, and displeasing his parents, however good-natured he may be to his schoolfellows, or whatever may be the address and activity which he displays in his boyish sports and amusements.

This, then, is our lurking disease, of which it becomes us to be fully aware. This is the weak point about us, for which we must seek a remedy, and which, if suffered to go on, will destroy us altogether. It is for this chiefly that we require to be born again. Partial faults may be corrected by other physicians; our worldly interest will often cure idleness and wastefulness; our natural affection and humanity will make us kind to our relations and friends, and dispose us to relieve the distresses of our neighbours; our regard to our bodily health may keep us free from sen-



sual indulgences; our sense of honour may preserve our tongue from falsehood; but this is only removing a local complaint, while the general decay of the constitution is going on as fast as ever. Christ only can make us sound from head to foot in the body and in the limbs—free from outward sores and from inward weakness and sickliness. He alone can give us a new and healthy nature; He alone can teach us so to live, as to make this world a school for heaven. All that is wanted is, that we should see our need of Him, and fly to Him for aid. He came into the world to give sight unto the blind; but they are His own words, that He also came to make those blind who thought that they saw; to ensure, that is, a heavier condemnation to all those who refuse the cure that is offered them, because they do not feel their sickness; they will naturally perish in their folly, and the offer of assistance having been made and rejected, only serves to make their folly more evident.

One of the main uses which I would make of the fact, that our nature is evil from our youth, is in correcting a most common and most mischievous practice of using the word ‘natural,’ as if it were the same with ‘excusable,’ or ‘pardonable.’ It is commonly said, ‘Such and such faults are so natural at such an age, or under such circumstances, that we cannot pass a severe judgment upon them.’ Now to a certain degree this is said with justice. *We* cannot pass a severe judgment upon them, because he who judgeth another condemneth himself; for he who judgeth, doeth the same things. *We* must not blame harshly natural faults, because we are ourselves so often guilty of them. So far, then, as an argument to make us charitable, the word ‘natural’ may usefully be employed; but with regard to our own conduct, or that of those for whom we are at all answerable, we must remember that to call a fault ‘natural,’ is merely to enforce the language of the Scripture, that they who are in the flesh cannot please

God: that the flesh and the spirit are striving against one another; and that if we live after the flesh, that is, according to our own natural inclinations, we shall die. What we call natural may be called, not more truly, but more profitably, in the language of Scripture, ‘the sin that doth so easily beset us.’ In youth, thoughtless selfishness is natural; in manhood and old age, it is no less natural that our selfishness should be of another kind,—cold and calculating, and preferring to every thing else the advantages, or comforts, or honours which the world can offer. But because these things are natural, are they therefore excusable? or do not they show the need which we have of the fulfilment of God’s promise, that He will give us a new heart and a new spirit, that we may live and not die? So far from being excusable, when we feel that a fault or bad disposition is natural to us, it is only a reason why we should strive with the greatest earnestness against it. Who is in danger from sins which are not natural to him? And, therefore, when we are tempted into the faults and follies of our peculiar age or station, we should look upon it as a kindly warning rather to avoid them than to yield to them, as a hint to tell us where we are wandering, and to remind us of the great danger in which we are living so long and so heedlessly.

It is very true, that if we indulge in no other than natural faults, we shall be no worse than the generality of our neighbours; but woe to us if we are not better than the great mass of mankind; and most unhappy are we, if we have no higher aim, when we enter into active life, than merely to be as good as others around us. Christ’s lesson is of a very different kind. He tells us, that unless our righteousness shall exceed, He does not say the righteousness of the world in general, but even the righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees;—men, that is, of a much stricter and better life than the rest of the

they therefore excusable? Nay, rather ‘for these things’ sake cometh the wrath of God upon the children of disobedience;’ and ‘they who do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God.’ They who live according to their nature shall not inherit the kingdom of God;—they who indulge in the natural faults of their age and station, shall be exposed to the wrath of God falling on the children of disobedience. It is not that which is natural to us which we ought to cultivate, but rather that which is not natural, which belongs to a better nature than ours, and which will cause us to be renewed after the image of our Maker, which naturally<sup>1</sup> we have lost. It is the nature of the ground, if we take no pains with it, to bring forth weeds; it is our nature to indulge in evil thoughts and evil actions; but the ground which is foul with weeds is rejected, and nigh unto cursing, whose end is to be burned; and the heart of man, which is overrun with its natural desires and evil thoughts, cannot please God, but is an heir merely of the curse pronounced upon Adam, that he must die; is a stranger to God’s covenant of promise, and reserved only for the great day in which the wicked, and all who forget God, shall be turned to destruction for evermore.

<sup>1</sup> I use this expression generally, without at all meaning to say that the image of God was in every point defaced, and that of the devil set up in its place; but simply that the general expression of the countenance was become unlike, although some of the features might still retain a resemblance to the corresponding ones in the original.

## SERMON IV

### *IS CHRIST KNOWN IN NAME OR IN POWER?*

PHILIPPIANS iii. 8.

*I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of  
Christ Jesus my Lord.*

ANY man who can say this with sincerity, and has acted and is acting upon it, deserves to be considered one of the happiest of human creatures ; and every man who cannot say it is very miserable ; not that he always feels his misery, for then he would try to escape from it ; but he is miserable in reality, because he is going on in the sure road to destruction ; and his being blind to his own danger, only makes his case the more shocking, and places him more beyond the reach of any assistance.

The Scripture, in one or two places, speaks of double-minded men—of men who try to serve God and Mammon—men who are halting between two opinions. This is the character which may be given to half the world ; they do not count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus their Lord ; but they think that the knowledge of Christ is a great gain to them, and that other things are a great gain to them also ; but which to prefer they have never once for all decided. So sometimes they follow Christ, and sometimes the world ; and in this state of things, the world is sure to gain some advantage

people;—unless our righteousness shall exceed even these, we shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven. He tells us too, to strive to enter in at the strait gate; for broad is the gate and wide is the way which leadeth to destruction, and many there be who go in thereat. How comes it that they who enter in at the gate of destruction are so numerous? Is it that they commit great and scandalous sins; that they are thieves or murderers, or adulterers, or cruel oppressors, or given up to all those fleshly lusts which war against the soul? If there were none but those who trod the broad path of destruction, they would indeed be far too many; but yet they would scarcely be more than those who do not do all these things. But Christ says, that they who enter in at the strait gate are few, and they who enter in at the broad gate are many. He must mean, then, to speak of those who are guilty of what we call natural faults; that is, who in youth are idle and thoughtlessly selfish, because it is the nature of youth to be so; who in manhood are looking keenly after their own interest; who are selfish with a deeper and more deliberate selfishness, preferring above all things their honour, or their profit, or their ease, because such things are natural then. He must mean, in short, all that numerous class of persons who live according to the nature with which they were born, instead of casting it off, and taking in its stead a second and spiritual nature, which is given to those who are in Christ by His Holy Spirit. No, my brethren, the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these,—‘adultery, fornication, uncleanness, hatred, variance, emulation, wrath, strife, seditions, heresies, envyings, murders, drunkenness, revellings, and such like;’ or, as it is in another place, ‘inordinate affection, evil concupiscence, and covetousness, which is idolatry.’ These the Apostle calls ‘our members which are upon the earth;’—these are the things which are natural to us. But are

over us every day, and Christ gradually to lose it, till, at last, they who would not count other things but loss for Christ's sake, come to consider the Gospel as but loss for their own pleasure's sake, and soon do not give themselves the trouble of thinking at all about it.

‘The knowledge of Christ Jesus our Lord ;’ that is, the knowledge of our wants, and of the means by which those wants may be most fully satisfied ;—the knowledge of sin and of salvation. Men’s eyes in general are equally closed against both ; for as none but Christians have any thing like a true notion of their own evil, so also none but Christians have looked forward with any lively hope to the glory that shall be revealed hereafter. I mean none but Christians when speaking of ourselves in this country ; for it may be that men, under a false religion, may fix their hopes very eagerly on the blessings that are falsely promised them : but with us, if a man is not a Christian, he is generally of no religion at all ; and although some of this sort will say that they hope, through the mercy of God, to be eternally happy ; yet, in fact, no instances I believe are known, of such men being strongly moved by what they pretend to hope for, or of their making their hope the ruling principle of their conduct. Indeed, those who are Christians in name only, are themselves very little better ;—they say that they hope to go to heaven, but their hope is so tame, that one cannot see how it can yield them comfort, or how their happiness would be disturbed, if they were told that there was no such place as heaven in the universe.

We may remark, that when our Lord was foretelling the state of the world in after times, He more than once declared to His disciples that His Gospel would only in a small degree overcome the wickedness of the world. ‘When the Son of man cometh,’ He says, ‘shall He find faith upon the earth ?’ And He says again, that ‘as it was in

the days of Noah, so shall it be also in the days of the Son of Man ;' that as before the flood men ate and drank, bought and sold, planted and builded, and thought nothing of God, till His judgments burst upon them, and destroyed them all ;—that so it should be at the time <sup>1</sup> when the Son of Man should be revealed. Now how is it that so many amongst us are living exactly in the manner which Christ has described? Let us just consider the way in which the early part of life is generally passed, and we shall soon cease to wonder that it leads so often to an unchristian state of manhood.

To begin with the earliest infancy. Within a few days or weeks of its birth, the parents wish to have their child baptized. The wish arises many times from mere custom : all children are christened, and ours must not be different from those of our neighbours. There is sometimes, too, a little superstition ; a notion that baptism is a sort of charm which will preserve an infant from all mischief if it should die ; and there is, thirdly, the thought of getting friends together, and enjoying the festivities of what is called a christening. Whilst the child is taken to be baptized with such feelings on the part of his parents, they are provoking God to withhold His blessing from the sacrament which they thus profane ; nay, I had almost said, they are provoking Him to send a curse upon them, and not a blessing.

It is very curious to observe the different extremes in

<sup>1</sup> Those persons who expect that there will be a final triumph, not only of the name, but of the Spirit of Christ throughout the earth, and that the glorious pictures of the Prophecies will be realised in this life, understand our Lord's coming, spoken of in these passages, in its subordinate sense, of his coming to destroy Jerusalem ; but experience has shown us, that whatever may be the state of things at his second coming, his words are at least applicable to every period of his Church that has hitherto elapsed, and were scarcely ever more applicable than at present.

which men err with regard to the two sacraments. We know that many persons never can be prevailed upon to come to the Lord's Supper at all, because they are afraid of eating and drinking unworthily; yet we never hear of any who feel scruples about the sacrament of Baptism, or who are afraid of offering their child to receive the seal of the Christian covenant unworthily. Yet there can be no doubt that it is as great a sin to profane one of these ordinances as to profane the other; and a man who brings his child to be baptized, without any proper feeling of the blessings communicated in that sacrament, and of his own duties as connected with it, does, in fact, profane it as much as he who eats and drinks at the Lord's table with an unrepentant and uncharitable heart.

But let us go on and see what is done with a child after baptism: he is suffered, very often, to live in complete ignorance of everything that concerns his salvation. I have known boys of eight or nine years old, who did not so much as know what would happen to them after their death, but thought that after they were once put in the ground they would lie there for ever, and should never feel anything any more either of good or evil. But even where this is not the case, the knowledge of heavenly things is too often taught as a lesson, and no pains are taken to make it seize hold upon the heart, and to influence the conduct. Time passes on, and the child is sent to school, or is wanted to assist his parents in their work, or to do something for his own maintenance. At school he finds himself placed among other children, most of whom have had as little Christian instruction as himself; and instead of meeting with anything like Christian motives or Christian behaviour among his companions, he learns a set of notions such as human nature, unassisted by divine knowledge, and too young to be guided by reason, is likely to invent and to act upon. It too often happens also, that he gains little



or no religious instruction from his teachers, because they think, or pretend to think, that his parents will give it him at home: while his parents think that this, with all other kinds of learning, must be forborne during the short time that he is with them, that he may have some portion of the year which he may enjoy in perfect freedom. Besides it will often be the case, that the parents know and care little about spiritual things themselves; and then it is not likely that they should be able or anxious to impress them upon others. In this way the boy grows up into the man, with a confirmed unchristian practice, and scarcely any relics of Christian knowledge. Thus armed,—or rather I should say, thus naked,—thus shackled,—thus prostrate and helpless before his enemy, he enters upon the conflict with the stormy passions of youth, and all the innumerable temptations of the world. And what is, what can be the issue? In the ordinary course of things, it is a sinful life and a hopeless death; unless God sometimes touches the heart with a sense of its danger, and in His power and mercy brings it to a true and effectual conversion.

The picture which I have drawn may suit some conditions in life better than others; but in its principal points it will, I fear, apply too much to all. And what I am going to say is intended to be addressed also to all: and may be divided into two parts;—first, as far as concerns those who have children, scholars, or any persons under their charge, whose religious knowledge depends chiefly on their exertions: and secondly, with regard to those who, having grown up to youth or manhood, have yet not fully embraced the offer of salvation through Christ, nor have learnt to consider all things as loss when put in comparison with the excellency of the knowledge of their Saviour. First, then, I would address those on whom the Christian education of others does in a great measure depend. When

a parent sees his or her child first born into the world, let him think that he has given birth to an immortal creature, which must now exist for ever and ever, and must enjoy through all eternity the greatest happiness, or must suffer through all eternity the greatest misery. But, as a Christian, he may and ought to regard his child as an heir of everlasting life ; as a sharer in the Promises, as one whom God is ready to receive into His Covenant of Love. With such feelings he should take him to his baptism, and when he sees him washed with the water of regeneration, received into the number of Christ's flock ;—when he hears the assurance of the good will of his heavenly Father towards that infant, and the promise of the Holy Spirit to continue the work which was then begun, let him think how greatly, how solemnly, he is bound to do his part for his child, lest through the neglect of his earthly father, the mercies of his heavenly Father should have been offered to him in vain.

For some time after baptism we can do little service to our child's spiritual welfare, except by our prayers ; yet the sense of right and wrong is felt earlier than many people suppose, and a very young mind may be made to understand something of God, and of Christ. And here let me speak more particularly to those parents who are engaged in daily labour for the maintenance of their families. You may say that you have not time to attend to your children's learning as the rich have ; but you must recollect that a great many fathers at least, among those whom you call rich, are as much engaged in working for their families as you are, though in a different way ; and yet if they are good men, they make time to attend to the instruction of their children, because they know of what consequence it is that they should do so. But, indeed, every one has time enough to teach his child all knowledge necessary to salvation. It is not to be done

by set lessons, but by talking to him whenever an opportunity offers, by telling him that there is One greater and better than his father, or his mother, who made him and them, who provides them with every thing that they have, who sees and hears all that is done, or said, or thought ; who loves those that are good, and hates and will destroy all that are evil. A child too, may very soon be taught to love his Saviour, and will listen with greater eagerness when he hears how Jesus Christ<sup>1</sup> came down from heaven for his sake, how He lived in poverty and sorrow, and died a cruel death, that we might be made for His sake everlastingly happy. Let him be told how Christ loved little children,—how He commanded them to be brought unto Him, how by His outward gesture and deed He declared His good will unto them ; for He took them up in His arms, He put His hands upon them, and blessed them. Nay, even the third great truth which the Gospel teaches us, the sanctification of our hearts by the Holy Spirit, can be and often is taught practically to very young children, when they are taught to pray to God to make them good. Depend upon it, my brethren, you may train up your children in this saving knowledge with no expense of time, and with no other learning than the simplest acquaintance with the Gospel would give you. In fact, if you have a saving knowledge of Christ yourselves, you may give it also to your children. Do not think that you do all that is required of you if you send your child to school, or make him learn his Catechism. You are not bound to teach him to read, and to write, because that would take up

<sup>1</sup> I have almost copied the words of Miss Taylor's beautiful hymn beginning

‘Jesus, who lives above the sky,  
Came down to be a man, and die.’

The knowledge and love of Christ can nowhere be more readily gained by young children, than from the hymns of this most admirable woman, and may I add ? from some of the short stories of Mrs. Cameron, such as ‘Amelia,’ the ‘Two Lambs,’ the ‘Flower Pots.’

more time than you could spare, and you may not have learning enough yourselves to do it ; you do enough, therefore, on these points, if you send your child, when it is in your power, to a school where he may be taught them. But for all necessary parts of Christian knowledge, such as those of which I have been speaking, as you can give them to him yourselves, so you are bound to do it, or, at least to make yourselves certain that it is done properly either by you or by others. Again, you have not done enough by seeing that your children can say the Catechism : they may say it, and not be able to understand a word of it, as is very generally the case ; and besides, a child learns his Catechism as a task, and it is the hardest thing in the world to make very young persons connect their tasks with their practice ; they cannot fancy that what they learn in a book has anything to do with what they say and do when they are among their relations out of school. The knowledge of Christ which I have been recommending, is to be shown in the hearts and lives of your children ; just as you would teach them household work, that they may be useful about the house, or teach them how to plough, that they may go out and plough, to assist you or to earn their own bread. And by accustoming them early to love God and Christ, to thank Him for all good things, to pray to Him against all evil things, to be anxious to gain His favour, and to be afraid of offending Him, you will do what is most likely to make them grow up Christians, that is, to make them happy here, and happy through all eternity.

It remains that I should address those who have grown up to youth or manhood, without having yet fully embraced the offer of salvation through Christ. Whatever has been the neglect of your parents or instructors, you are now come to an age when you must make up for their fault by your own exertions, or else the neglect is no longer theirs,

but your own. You are called upon to turn to Christ, and to believe on Him ; and the threatenings addressed to the unconverted sinner are at present all in their full force addressed to you. Deceive not yourselves with the thought that you are baptized Christians already ; or that having been instructed in the truths of the Gospel, you are to be considered as Christ's disciples already. Remember that he that doeth righteousness is righteous ; that he that committeth sin, that is, who is in the habit of carelessly committing it, hath not seen Christ, neither knoweth Him, but is of the devil, who has been a sinner from the beginning. With young persons, such as I am speaking of, their state is of no doubtful kind ; it is not improvement that is required, but a change of heart and life ; a change of principles, of hopes, of fears, of masters ; a change from death unto life ; from Satan to God. They have walked all their lives, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and, therefore, they are still the children of wrath. Such persons, then, are required to learn the Christian's lesson ; to count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus, their Lord : not one thing or another thing only, but all things. Pleasure, vanity, fame, idleness, selfishness of every kind ; all must be accounted loss in comparison with Christ. And are they not loss, my brethren ? What shall it profit a man to gain the whole world and lose his own soul ? Or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul ? This strikes our ears at once as true ; but our hearts cannot be made to believe it on any experience but their own. He only who does truly belong to Christ, knows how completely what he has parted with is loss, and what he has received in exchange is gain. We must prove this ourselves, or we shall never fully understand it. 'O taste and see how gracious the Lord is,—blessed is the man that trusteth in him.'

## SERMON V

*THE CHRISTIAN BIRTHRIGHT SLIGHTED.*

MATT. xiii. 17.

*Verily I say unto you, that many prophets and righteous men have desired to see those things which ye see, and have not seen them; and to hear those things which ye hear, and have not heard them.*

THERE are a great many other passages in the Scripture, which speak nearly the same language: there are a great many which speak of the Gospel, as the greatest blessing which was ever given to the world; nay, it is said, that the things which it shows us, are so wonderful and so excellent, that even the angels desire to look into them. In this, as in many other instances, the words of the Scripture are repeated by ourselves over and over again, till they become words of course, which we fancy we most thoroughly believe. Everybody who calls himself a Christian, talks of the excellence and of the blessings of the Gospel, and that it is the most precious gift ever given by God to man. But it is very useful that we should be brought to think about what we thus readily confess: that we should not repeat a number of words without meaning, lest we most fatally deceive ourselves; that we should not talk of the Gospel as being the greatest blessing in the world, when in reality it is one of those for which we care the least; which goes the least way towards making us happy, and whose loss we should in our hearts endure with the least regret.

The words of my text have often struck the ears of us all, and few of us, perhaps, have stopped to ask ourselves how far we really could agree with them. Many prophets and righteous men have desired to see the things which Christ's disciples saw, and have not seen them. It seems all very natural that they should have desired it. But can we honestly say, that we should have desired the same thing, if we had been in their places? that is, that if we had been born before the birth of Christ, under the Law of Moses, we should have been anxious to know more of God's will, and to have clearer views of His purposes towards men than we possessed already. Perhaps we cannot fancy ourselves living in such a state of things, and, therefore, cannot tell what might have been our feelings. But there is a very easy and plain way of finding out how we should have felt then, by observing what we feel now. We may guess how much we should have longed for a thing before we had got it, by seeing how much we value it now that we have got it. We may tell whether we should have desired to see and hear what Christ's disciples saw and heard, by merely asking our own hearts how much pleasure it gives us, now that we do see and hear those same things. It may be, indeed, that we may be aware of the value of divine knowledge, after it is given to us, although we never should have thought or cared about it beforehand; but if we find that we do not care about it when it is put in our way, we may be very sure that we should never have missed it before we had it, and that we should never have gone out of our way to obtain it.

I believe that this would be the honest answer of most men calling themselves Christians, if they were not ashamed and afraid to examine and confess their real feelings. I believe, that when in the words of our Church we bless God for all the blessings of this life, but above all, for His inestimable love in our redemption, for the means of grace,

and for the hope of glory, that many repeat the words untruly ; that they feel the blessings of this life much more keenly than any spiritual blessing ; that they have derived much more comfort from them, than from the means of grace or the hope of glory. Now it is exceedingly mischievous to the character, to be in this manner living in a state of falsehood and self-deceit ; to be repeating a set of words, and fancying that we repeat them truly, when, in fact, they are a lie in our mouths every time we utter them, because our hearts do not agree with them. It is often said that the lives of Christians are no better than those of unbelievers : nor is it at all to be wondered at of the great body of those who call themselves Christians, because they are unbelievers in their hearts. They really do not know what the Gospel is, nor are they at all the happier for it ; they cannot, therefore, be thankful for it, nor look upon it as the means of their everlasting salvation. The means of grace and the hope of glory, which are the two great blessings of the Gospel, and which are the things so fondly desired by good men in the old times, are to many of us, words without a meaning, words which awaken in the mind no clear thoughts or lively feelings. The means of grace are every day neglected or thrown away with indifference : the hope of heavenly glory never enters the mind of many a man from one end of the year to the other, unless he happens to be seized with an illness : and then, it is not so much any lively hope of heaven, as an attempt to persuade ourselves and others that we have it, in order to conceal our rising fear of hell. That this is the truth, every man's experience who has seen anything of the world around him, will surely be able to confirm.

The means of grace to the soul, are like the means of health and strength to the body ; and at such a rate would a true Christian value them. The body requires food and clothing, and exercise and rest ; and every man feels the



importance of satisfying these wants. Nay, they are well called the necessities of life ; as without them we cannot so much as live. We should therefore very justly reckon a man a madman, who was to be careless about these things ; and it is, in fact, the great business of our lives to provide ourselves with them. We are ever taking thought what we shall eat, and what we shall drink, and wherewithal we shall be clothed. But the wants of the soul do not so easily win our attention ; the love of our spiritual life, the love of life eternal, is not half so strong within us as the love of our natural life. The meat and drink of our souls, their raiment, their exercise, their rest, all that is required to keep them in health and vigour, how easily do we consent to part with this. I knew a case of a person who was going to live abroad, and when this purpose was mentioned to one who was a sincere Christian, his first question was, what means of grace were likely to be met with in the country to which his friend was going. This was said in private conversation, to a common friend ; it was spoken quite naturally, just as much so as any of us might have asked about the healthiness of the country, whether provisions were cheap or dear in it ; what was its society, and what its general conveniences of living. It was the simple question of a true disciple of Christ, who was used to think the soul of more consequence than the life which now is ; who was accustomed to look upon the kingdom of God and his righteousness, as on things which we were most concerned to seek, and which it was of the first consequence to secure the means of gaining. Such a man, it is likely, if he had lived amongst those prophets and kings, of whom our Lord speaks in the text, would have desired, like them, to see and hear those things which we do see and hear now.

But people say that the soul can do better without its support than the body, or that they can always take care of

it themselves, let them go where they will. They would not say so, if they marked the changes in their soul's health, with half the attention that they do those of the body. A day's hunger or a day's cold, or half a day's sickness, or a night's want of sleep, speaks loud and plain enough to all ; but many days of want of appetite for heavenly things, many days of want of earnestness about our duty, of indulged idleness, of cold or half dead charity, these are only observed by the quickened eye and lively conscience of him who really believes that his main business every day, is to make himself fitter for heaven, as he is every day drawing nearer either to it or to hell. It is because we do not watch narrowly all these wants and sicknesses of the soul, that we think the means of curing or preventing them are little needed ; it is because they give us no sensible pain, and fill us with no fears for the future, that we do not watch them narrowly. In fact, our souls are, by nature, far weaker and more sickly than our bodies, and, therefore, they require much greater care. Therefore, every means of grace that we have, we should make the most of : and not the best man alive is furnished with one more than is needful for him. But though the best of us cannot afford to spare any of the means which God has given us, yet the worst of us will find that they have enough, if they will but carefully improve them.

Every one of us, I say, has the means of grace put within his reach sufficient to save his soul if he will. To all who hear me, is the Gospel set forth every week in this place ; and I speak it boldly, when I say, that no one in this parish is so ignorant as not to know that he ought to come here. I am supposing now the case of those who possess the very fewest advantages : those who cannot read and who have no one at home to read to them, or to tell them what they ought to know. Even these can come to church, and they know that they should come. But it

will be said, that if they do come, they cannot understand what they hear ; that our Church service, and our preaching can only do good to those who know something of the Gospel already. I know very well that a very ignorant person cannot understand all or even the greatest part of what he would hear in church, but still he would understand something : it might be a very little, but still some drops of the water of life would be mixed with the stream. Now let us remember how Christ Himself dealt with the multitude : ‘without a parable spake He not unto them.’ Do we think that all who heard Him, understood all that they heard ! We know that His own Apostles did not, and we may be sure that there were hundreds more who were quite as ignorant, and as slow of understanding as they. But then, were Christ’s parables useless ? God forbid : they were not lost upon a single honest and sincere heart : if they were hid, they were hid to those that were lost ;<sup>1</sup> to those who cared not about them, who understood little, and took no pains to understand more. But a good man, when he heard our Lord’s parables, would understand, perhaps, just enough to show him that what he heard was good. He would see the mighty works that Christ did, and would be drawn by them to follow Him. He would thus hear Him often, and by putting together what he heard at different times, he would gradually get to understand more. Nor would he fail to ask questions of others who had attended on Christ longer, and had heard Him explain Himself more fully. Meantime, the Spirit of God would watch His own work, He would daily give more and more help ; He would open the understanding, and cleanse and soften the heart ; to him that had something, more would be given ; and he who was faithful only in a very little, would have many talents more committed to his charge. So it is with those who come to church, and

<sup>1</sup> 2 Cor. iv. 3.

understand only a very small part of what they hear; let them come again, and they may, perhaps, understand a very little more; but these very little portions, when added together, become something considerable at last; and even thus, I do not doubt, that he who really wanted to learn, might learn much. But cannot the most ignorant man amongst us do what Christ's honest, though ignorant hearers did then? Cannot he ask questions of those who have attended on Christ longer, and have become acquainted with His lessons more fully? I am still supposing the case of a man who cannot read, and who has no relations or near friends to teach him the Gospel. Yet he has his ministers, to whom he can go; and there are very few even of the most ignorant and careless ministers, who would not be able and willing, if seriously applied to, to help such a man to all knowledge needful to his salvation. If he cannot read, and is too old, or has not time or opportunity to learn, he certainly loses a great advantage: but he is not in a worse condition than thousands and ten thousands of Christians, in every age, who have been taught by hearing, and not by reading: he is not worse off than a blind man, who must depend upon others for the refreshing his memory, let his knowledge be what it may. He can learn the way of salvation, he can know those things which many prophets and kings desired to know, and never had their desire fulfilled. He can know that there is a resurrection to eternal life purchased by the blood of Christ, and given to all Christ's sincere servants. He can know, therefore, that whatever are his troubles, or whatever the good fortune of the wicked, yet that the judgment of God standeth sure, and that there will be a difference between him that serveth God, and him that serveth him not.<sup>1</sup> This was the knowledge which the Psalmist greatly desired, when he said that he

<sup>1</sup> Mal. iii. 18.

was grieved at the wicked, he did also see the ungodly in such prosperity;<sup>1</sup> and when he was so much perplexed by these seeming marks of God's neglect of the world, that he confesses, he had almost said even as they; that is, he had almost joined with the wicked, in saying, that God would never punish evil, or show mercy to His servants.

Another great means of grace furnished us by the Gospel, is the knowing so much more fully than any one knew before, how we are to become most like to God. Our advantages in this respect, we can best understand, by looking at the lives even of good men in the old time, and comparing them with those of real Christians now. We are not better than they were by nature, yet how many faults they allowed themselves to be guilty of, which good Christians now, being, according to the promise, more clearly taught of God, and having a better and more perfect law in the influence of the abiding Spirit of God, are enabled to avoid. There are instances of cruelty, and instances of deceit; there are violent passions and a spirit of national pride, often recurring in the characters of the Old Testament, which show how hard it is for men to overcome the influence of the opinions and practices of the world around them, and how clear the light must be which they will not either mistake or overlook. I do not say that even the light of the Gospel itself is bright enough to shine into every dark corner of the heart of man; I do not say that we know the perfect will of God even now so fully as we ought to do. But still a great deal has been gained; to love our enemies, to look upon all men as our brethren in Christ, to be meek and humble, and to let our yea be yea, and our nay, nay; these are principles of the Gospel, which no sincere follower of Christ can avoid knowing, nor can he conceal from himself that if he belong to Christ, they must be *his* principles also.

<sup>1</sup> Ps. lxxiii.

This fuller and clearer knowledge of what is good and excellent, is to honest and good minds the greatest blessing : it is the best and most precious learning in the world ; it is learning the great business of life. Now, whoever feels in himself that he cares little for the knowledge,—that he would rather learn the way to be rich, or the way to be great, or the way to be comfortable in the world, than the way to be good ; it is very plain that to him the Gospel is offered in vain ; its light is hid from his eyes, he has no desire for the bread and the water of life. What, though such a man may be called a Christian, he has really neither lot nor part in the matter ; he is a member of the Church on earth, because here the kingdom of God is like a net cast into the sea, which gathered in itself fish of every kind ;<sup>1</sup> but he will be cast out from that glorious Church, not having spot or wrinkle, or any such thing,<sup>2</sup> but holy and without blemish, which alone will be the Church of Christ in heaven. Of those most unhappy persons, who know not what it is to feel as God's children have ever felt, who desire, who love, who care for earthly objects, and an earthly treasure, the greatest part are beyond the preacher's power ; the hardness of their hearts can be melted by nothing but the extraordinary grace of God. Our hope is, or else indeed we were wasting time most idly, that some few, some one or two, perhaps some single one, may be struck by the fact, that what good men of old most desired, is now lying before him unregarded ; that what good men regard as the greatest of blessings, he would part with without missing them ; that what the angels desire to look into, awakens in him less interest and curiosity than the commonest trifle of the day. One or two may be struck by feeling that this is their case, and may wish it were otherwise. They may say within themselves, ' Lord, open our eyes, and increase our faith ; give us a new heart,

<sup>1</sup> Matt. xiii. 47.<sup>2</sup> Eph. v. 27.

and a new spirit, that we may live and not die.' If there be any one soul in this place which breathes such a prayer, may God, who has given the desire for good, give also the labour and the watchfulness to obtain it; and may He give His blessing on the effort. Before another week, Christ may repeat to the careless soul His own sorrowful words over Jerusalem: 'If thou hadst known, at least in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace! but now they are hid from thine eyes. Behold, thy house is left unto thee desolate: and verily I say unto thee, thou shalt not see me henceforth, till thou shalt say, Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord.'<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Luke xix. 42.

## SERMON VI.

*THE CHRISTIAN BIRTHRIGHT ENJOYED.*

ISAIAH xi. 6.

*The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid; and the calf and the young lion and the fatling together; and a little child shall lead them.*

ANY one who is in the habit of reading the prophets, and especially Isaiah, must know how many passages are there to be met with like that which I have just been repeating: how many places there are in which a happy state of things is foretold, quite different from that which we now see around us. This picture of happy days to come is generally mixed up with prophecies of the time of Messiah's or Christ's kingdom; a great period in the history of the world, which has already lasted eighteen hundred years; and will last, through evil fortune and through good, till the world itself shall be destroyed.

It is plain from the words of the text, that Isaiah was one of those prophets and righteous men, of whom I spoke in my last sermon, who desired to see and hear the things which Christ's disciples saw and heard. But it may be said that he desired to see the kingdom of Christ, because he thought that it would bring with it a greater and happier change in the state of the world than it has done; because he looked forward to it as to a time when the wolf should dwell with the lamb, and the leopard lie down



with the kid ; that is, when there should be nothing but peace and comfort everywhere. What then are we to think of such passages as those in my text ? Did the prophet deceive himself with visions that were never to come to pass, saying, ‘Peace, peace,’ when there was no peace ? or did he look forward to a time which will certainly come, but which is not come yet ? or must we not understand his words to the very letter, but take them as a highly coloured picture of a state of things, which was indeed to be better than any which had gone before it, but yet not so glorious or so happy as he seemed to look for ? The question is one which deserves to be answered, because unless we understand it, we must read very great portions of the books of the prophets with no benefit ; and it may be useful also, to consider it as connected with our last Sunday’s subject, in order to find out whether there be not more reality of happiness in the Gospel, than we are commonly inclined to give it credit for.

Now, it is not, perhaps, very easy to decide, whether we have a right to look forward exactly to such a state of things as that spoken of in the text ; whether there will ever be a time when the earth shall be restored to the fruitfulness which it had before it was cursed for man’s sin ; and when the beasts shall cease to prey on one another, or to be fierce and mischievous to man. I say, that we cannot quite tell whether such a great change will ever take place on earth or no, because the same sort of language is used in the Revelation, to describe the blessed state of things in heaven ; and what is merely spoken of Jerusalem in the Old Testament, is applied in the New to that heavenly Jerusalem, which is the mother of us all—of all the true Israel of God. One thing we may feel very sure of : that if mankind, at Christ’s first coming, had listened to His call, and had become His followers in deed, and not in word only ; or if ever they should do so hereafter, and

were to become everywhere really Christians, that then the curse passed upon the earth would be taken off; and the prophecy, that instead of the thorn should come up the fir-tree, and instead of the briar should come up the myrtle-tree, would be fulfilled to the very letter. Thus much I think we may say with certainty; but whether men ever will be so good, and, therefore, whether the earth will really ever enjoy such a state of blessing, is a much more difficult question to answer confidently. At any rate we know, that there will be a time and place where there will be none but the holy and the good dwelling together; and where, therefore, every blessing of every kind will be poured richly forth upon them. And as our main hopes as Christians are turned towards the life that is to come hereafter, rather than to that which now is, it is not unreasonable to suppose that the prophets were directed to use words which should refer also to the life beyond the grave; and that while speaking of the kingdom of Christ, the Holy Spirit showed to them visions of its future well-doing, which should relate to the last and unchangeable period of its final triumph in heaven. But we want to see whether there is not a great good also offered to us in the Gospel, in this life: to show the truth of the Apostle's words, that godliness hath the promise of the life that now is, as well as of that which is to come: to see whether there may not be contained in it all the comforts of righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost, although we may never see the wolf dwelling with the lamb, or the myrtle and the fir-tree coming up, instead of the briar and the thorn.

There are a great many persons, indeed, who have very little notion of such inward comforts, and, therefore, think them very little to be desired; and it is very certain, that no man can have a full and sufficient notion of their value, till he has made a trial of them himself. But then all

who have tried them speak of them exactly in the same manner, as being the greatest blessing in the world : and it is not fair or reasonable to take the word of those who know nothing about them, rather than that of those who do. Talk to a very ignorant man of the pleasures of knowledge, and he certainly will not understand us ; and, if we were taught nothing till we were grown up to manhood, and then left to our own free choice, whether we would learn or no, I think that just the same thing would happen, which does now daily happen with regard to Christian learning. That is to say, all those persons who had gained any knowledge would agree in being delighted that they had gained it, and would feel how much it had added to their usefulness and happiness. Some few would be struck by what they heard said of the sweets of knowledge, would believe what was told them of it, would set about learning themselves, and would soon know by experience, what they before only knew by faith ; that is, by believing what others said about it. But the greater number would be much too lazy to take any pains in the matter ; they would think themselves very well off already, and would not believe that an addition of knowledge would make them happier. So they would remain ignorant, and never could taste the sweets of that which they would not so much as make any trial of. But as it is, we are forced to go through the dullest and perhaps hardest parts of knowledge when we are children ; and thus we gain some experience of the use and pleasure of it before we come to act for ourselves, and are encouraged to go on in the hope of gaining more. Besides, knowledge of different sorts is necessary to enable us to do well in the world in various ways, and, therefore, its use is more easily acknowledged ; for, I believe there are very few in comparison, who love it for its own sake, and who would wish to improve their minds, if by doing so they were likely to

get neither credit nor profit. What I have said of knowledge, applies much more to goodness and holiness : we do not get a taste for them in our youth, nor do they so certainly help us forward in the world, nor is it so hard to rise in the world without them. Few, therefore, seek after them, except those who have believed the assurance of God and the experience of all good men, and who try to get them for their own sakes. There may be some, however, who have never yet thought much about the matter, and who would really like to know in what manner the Gospel, or the sincere believing in it, has the promise of the life that now is ; and it is these persons whom I am to try now to satisfy.

First of all, the Gospel makes a man industrious, sober, and careful of his time ; which no one, I suppose, would deny to be three great benefits. Idleness and drunkenness, in a mere worldly point of view, are great evils, and are allowed to be so by other men just as much as by Christians. Nay, even those people who do indulge in them, would much rather that they did not ; they would like to be active and sober, when they think coolly about it ; but when the temptation falls in their way, they let themselves be overcome by it. Now it is the great excellence of the Gospel, that it furnishes us with the strongest of all helps to overcome temptations—the fear of God, and the hope of reward, at first ; and afterwards, as the Spirit of Christ changes us more and more into Christ's image, it really makes us lose our relish for what is bad ; so that, at last, there is much less temptation to overcome. In very bad cases of drunkenness, indeed, nothing can make a man lose his relish for his sin ; because, by indulging in it a long time, he has thoroughly spoiled his taste and his constitution ; and though, if he goes on, it is sure to kill him in the end, yet he feels so wretched if he leaves it off for a time, that he is eager to take his poison once again. This, which happens very often with the drunkard, is

exactly that state which all sin of long continuance makes us liable to ; as long drinking so spoils the healthful taste and tone of the body, that it always is coveted and craved for, even while it is working the most certain mischiefs ; so wickedness, if long practised, spoils the taste of our souls, and makes repentance impossible ; which is the case with many bad persons, even in this life, and with all the devils and evil men with them when they shall be cast into hell. But before the bad habits have become so powerful, the hopes held out by the Gospel, and the good thoughts and high principles to which it accustoms us, are the surest means of destroying them gradually, and putting into the heart good habits in their room.

Secondly, the Gospel makes us care as much as we ought, and no more, for the things of this life ; for worldly cares or sorrows, or prospects of gain or loss, of honour or disgrace. Here, again, people would agree readily, that it would be a very happy thing to be in such a state of mind, if possible ; but they say that it is not possible ; that, in fact, religious persons care about worldly things just as much as their neighbours, and that it is mere hypocrisy for any one to pretend that he does not. Observe now, how great mischief is done by those who have a form of godliness, but deny the power thereof ; who draw near to God with their lips, talking much of Christ and of their own sinfulness, and of the preciousness of the Scriptures, while in their hearts they are far from Him, loving and working greedily that which is evil. If a man, after talking to his servants or his family about the excellence of heavenly things, and the little value of those of the world, is seen presently to be violently angry or violently troubled about some worldly injury done him, or some worldly loss sustained ; we are too apt, not to say that the man is not a good Christian, and that he has not yet learned the true Christian temper, but to lay the blame upon the Gospel,

and say that Christians, however they may talk, do, in fact, feel and act like other men. No, my brethren, it is most false. Christians do not feel or act like other men—it is most otherwise: their seed remaineth in them; they are born of God and made again after His image; and they learn, after their imperfect measure, to feel and act like Christ. But all are not Christians who are called so: and many a man who rails against them as hypocrites, has never known a Christian in his life, nor has any notion of what he really is. But I would boldly call on those to witness, who have seen and known real servants of Christ, in all the various circumstances of life, whether it is not true of them as of the Apostle, that they know both how to be abased and how to abound; that they bear good fortune meekly and soberly, and evil fortune calmly and contentedly; and both for the same reason, that it is the constant habit of their minds to regard God's anger as the main thing to be feared, and His promises as the main thing to be loved.

Nor is it only true, that of two people endowed with equal health and spirits by nature, and placed in nearly the same circumstances of fortune, the Christian will go through life a happier man than the other who is not so. There is a great deal more to be said for the comforts of the Gospel than this: he who possesses them will be a happier man than many who are without them, though they should be rich and he should be poor; though they should be healthy and prosperous, and he sickly and visited with affliction. I would not be thought to speak lightly of the miseries of poverty or disease: nothing is less likely to do good, nothing seems less spoken in Christian sincerity and kindness, than the language which says it is easy to bear those evils which we ourselves are ignorant of. Assuredly, no man can have seen any thing of the condition of the very poor, no man can have ever watched by the bed of sickness,

or witnessed persons suffering under a long-continued weakness and loss of health, without feeling very doubtful with what patience he could himself have borne, or bear hereafter, such trials, if it had pleased, or should please God, to visit him with them. Yet it is equally certain, that even in these distressed states, the grace of God through Jesus Christ has given, and does give continually, I do not say patience only, but comfort and an absolute sense of thankfulness, which makes the sufferer say with Peter on the Mount, Lord, it is good for me to be here !' Now this is no forced or high-wrought feeling, such as has made some men bear a painful death with seeming triumph : such feelings will not go on quietly day after day, and year after year, when there is no one to admire them, or even to notice them. It is the mere common sense of Christian faith, and Christian piety ; the fruit of the Spirit of God in the changed and enlightened heart. It is the mere habit of comparing this life with that which is to come, of looking steadfastly at God's promises, till they fill the whole heart with abiding joy and love : so that though the outward man perisheth, yet the inward man is renewed day by day. If it is very rare to see poverty borne with such a spirit, we should remember, first, that there must be few real Christians among the poor in proportion to their numbers, just as is the case among the rich ; for all inherit the same evil nature ; and, secondly, that of those who are sincere Christians now, many have not been so very long, but have been led by the pressure of the world's evils to take up the hopes and comforts of the Gospel more than they had ever done before. Now, although such persons have become wise in time enough, we trust, for their soul's salvation, yet they must not be surprised if they do not taste the full blessings of the Gospel here in this life. We cannot find such benefit in a thing which we only begin to learn when we want to practise it, as if we had prepared

ourselves for the need by studying it before at our leisure. Habits cannot be changed in an instant ; and, least of all, the habit of looking to worldly things for our happiness. He who has been accustomed to do so for many years of his life, when he sees his idol suddenly broken to pieces, and runs, for the first time, to seek for help of the living God, must not wonder if the regret and longing for what he has lost still continues to trouble him, if he cannot soon get familiar with the hopes and desires of the Gospel. Assuredly, it was not said in vain, that we should remember our Creator in the days of our youth ; that we should prove ourselves in the armour of our Christian warfare while danger is yet at a distance, and not first essay to put it on in the alarm and confusion of the actual battle. He who went through life as a Christian, learning to look at the world from the beginning with a Christian's eye, would find himself strong in the strength of Christ to bear whatsoever was laid upon him, and would say with the Apostle, in perfect sincerity, ' In all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us ; for I reckon the sufferings of this present time as not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us.'

These, then, are some of the blessings which are given to the disciples of Christ in this life ; and they are enough to make us think the language of the Prophet not altogether extravagant, even as applied to what particular Christians should enjoy before the general triumph of Christ's kingdom. A strength to overcome temptations, and a certain charm to sweeten the worst evils of life, are no inconsiderable benefits ; and such, if we choose honestly to try it, we shall find Christ's Gospel. We may, therefore, justly sympathise with the Prophets in the warm language of thankfulness which they use concerning it.



## SERMON VII.

*THE UNITY OF THE SPIRIT.*

EPHESIANS iv. 3.

*Endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.*

THE unity which St. Paul here exhorts the Ephesians to keep, is the object of our Lord's last and most solemn prayer for all His disciples. 'I pray,' He says, 'for all who believe on me, that they all may be one, as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us.' And the Apostles, in the spirit of their Lord, are earnest on several occasions in recommending the same thing,—that we should be of one heart and one mind, forming all together one undivided Christian body. Now it has happened with this as with others of our Lord's commands, that men have greatly corrupted it; and whilst scarcely obeying it at all in its most important part, they have applied it to other things which it has very little concern with, and have there strained it a great deal too much. I mean, that while the unity of spirit, which Christ and his Apostles prayed for, has been felt very imperfectly; an unity of form and outward ceremonies, about which they have displayed no earnestness, has been required and commended in over measure.

The consequence has been, that Christians have not felt that real sense of brotherhood and union with one another,

which flow from a consciousness of being engaged in one and the same most difficult contest, with the same temptations and the same enemies, the same object of their hopes and labour,—the same guide and comforter, and Saviour and God. But they have laid great stress on their all being arranged in the same way, holding the same opinions on all points connected with the Gospel, wearing in a manner the same garb, and speaking in the same language. So they have perpetually mistaken their friends for their enemies, and their enemies for their friends: they have quarrelled with the true servants of Christ, on account of some trifling differences which ought to have weighed nothing at all in the balance; and they have made common cause with selfish and worldly men, because they have agreed with them on points of form, although their spirit has been totally different from the spirit of Christ.

Let us see, then, what is the unity for which Christ prayed, and which St. Paul bids us endeavour to keep. Our Lord often said that He was going to establish a kingdom, which was to be in opposition to the kingdom of Satan, the prince of this world. This kingdom He calls the kingdom of God, because they who belong to it do own God as their sovereign, not in word only but in deed, and try to promote His service. He bade us make it a part of our prayers to God, that this kingdom may come; adding, as a description of what effect it would produce if it did come; ‘Thy will be done in earth as it is in heaven.’ He began it when He sent His Spirit on His Apostles, and told them to go and teach all nations; and they went out, and in a few years brought in thousands into the kingdom of God and of Christ. The laws of this kingdom were different from all others; its subjects were to act as though this world were not their home, but as if they had one great business in their passage through it, to fit themselves and

others for the place of their everlasting rest. It followed, therefore, that they should look upon life with different eyes from those of other men ; that many actions which other men justified on the ground of necessity, because they made that necessary which their worldly good required, were by Christians looked upon as unlawful, because they knew of no other necessity than that of pleasing God, and avoiding hell. Hence, they were under no temptation to resent affronts, because they cared not for worldly honour ; they did not engage in disputes and fightings, because worldly objects were not to them so exceedingly desirable : one business they had, and one desire, to enlarge Christ's kingdom, by making themselves and others as like him as possible. Beginning, then, from childhood to act on a system so new and so peculiar, Christians would naturally require the support and countenance of each other. Obligated to offend so many, oftentimes their own nearest relations and friends,—for a man's foes were often those of his own household,—they would need the warm love and zealous sympathy of their fellow Christians, and the encouragement of seeing them tread the same path with themselves. Obligated to listen every day to the low principles of the world around them, they wanted those with whom they could take counsel in a kindred spirit, and walk in the house of God as friends. Acting in a way that necessarily made them singular, they would be drawn more closely to those whose principles and practice were the same as their own. The kingdom of God thus required its members to be closely united together, and to direct their joint efforts towards the overthrow of the power of Satan over mankind. They were to be the leaven put into the meal, the salt of the earth, the light of the world ; till the irresistible influence of their lives, full of purity, and affection, and zeal, and peace, and happiness, should make all men gradually join their society ; so that the earth

should at last be full of the knowledge and of the love of the Lord, as the waters cover the sea.

Such was the glorious design of that living temple of God, the Christian Church or society. It is plain from this, that no evil passion, that no worldly spirit, could possibly assist in furthering its object; for it would be, indeed, calling upon Satan to cast out Satan. The Christian unity then was a unity of goodness, an affection of good men for one another, because they mutually loved God. But so soon as this was changed for another sort of unity in which bad men could also be partakers; when Christians strove not to put down the principles of the world, but to employ them for the increase of the number of those who were called believers, but who were not so in heart; so soon as they borrowed some of the notions of the law of Moses, and some of those of worldly kingdoms, thinking that they were enlarging the kingdom of God, by persuading Satan's servants merely to change <sup>1</sup> the name of their master without changing the spirit of their worship, then the unity of which St. Paul spoke so earnestly was lost; and men ceased to be one with each other in the Father and the Son. The purpose for which Christ's

<sup>1</sup> This bears upon a vast subject, and one of the greatest importance both to the temporal and spiritual advancement of the nations of Europe, the history of the nominal conversion of the northern nations to Christianity, when they settled themselves in the several provinces of the Roman Empire. The adoption of Christianity as the national religion in point of form and profession of opinions, while its spirit and principles were either unknown or hated, has introduced a confusion into our civil and ecclesiastical relations, under which we are at this moment labouring. It has led, for instance, to the maintenance of these two inconsistent propositions by the very same persons;—that the government may interfere in church matters, because in a Christian country the government is to be regarded as Christian, and a king must be a member of the Church; and yet that Christianity does not meddle with political institutions, with forms of government, questions of public rights, legislation, war, and peace, &c., because Christ's kingdom is not of this world.

Church was founded, so far as this world was concerned, the advancement of that kingdom of God, for whose coming we daily pray, became presently stopped. And, therefore, wars, and intrigues, and lusts, and eager worldly passions of every kind, and low and careless principles of living, are almost as common in the world now, as they were before the formation of the Christian society. Is this, then, the kingdom of God upon earth, where every thought, and word, and deed, are brought into the obedience of Christ? or, where are now to be seen any marks of that Christian unity, that common striving, not against flesh and blood, but against all manner of spiritual evil, which was to subsist between every Christian? It was the remark of a writer in the early ages of the Church, that men were not born Christians, as they were born Jews, or Greeks, or Romans; that they were made so afterwards by their own effort, and act, and deed. But now people are born Christians, and but too seldom think of making themselves so. They seem to think themselves Christians in the same way as they are Englishmen, by the accident of their birth; and they too often never think of inquiring into the objects of a society, into which they entered without trouble, and indeed, without their own knowledge.

Here, then, is one great cause why Christian unity is destroyed, because the Church is full of so many unreal members, who take not the smallest interest about it, and are actually all the time in the service of the enemy. What would become of an army, in which in the hour of battle, the soldier had to suspect every one who stood near him, lest an enemy might be disguised under the uniform of a friend? Or, how would it be possible for him then to pick out and distinguish those on whom he could rely, when they were scattered up and down, and lost amid the crowd of traitors to the cause? And, would he not feel far more closely united to a band of ill-armed and un-

organized labourers or artisans, who should sally forth at that moment to take part with him heartily against the common enemy, than to those who wore the same clothes, were arrayed in the same regiment, and commanded by the same officers, but who in heart and spirit were false and hollow?

But whilst the true Christian unity was disappearing, a false one of a very different kind sprang up in its room. To be Christians in the real sense of the term, was a sacrifice of all sorts of evil and selfish feelings; but to become members of the Church and to call themselves Christians, was no sacrifice at all. In order, then, to keep up a bond of some sort between men who had no real spiritual union with each other or with Christ, great stress was laid not on a sameness<sup>1</sup> of principle in religion, but on a sameness of opinion; not on a unity of faith in the scriptural sense of the word, but of faith in another sense, and which in fact is very nearly the same as opinion. Of this kind of unity the bonds were soon greatly increased, and the system added greatly to the worldly power and splendour of the Church. For, as soon as it was said that they who hold such and such opinions, were sound members of the Church, the careless and the ignorant, who had neither the ability nor the desire to inquire into their truth, embraced them with little scruple, glad to find themselves admitted so cheaply to the privileges of Christ's Church, without the painful effort of becoming born again with new principles

<sup>1</sup> The distinction between faith in the scriptural and faith in the ecclesiastical sense of the term, is exactly that which exists between principle and opinion, and which cannot be more justly defined than in the words of Aristotle. 'By having good or bad principles, we are good or bad men: but our opinions make us neither good nor bad. Our principles make us take up a thing or avoid it: our opinions pronounce upon its nature or qualities; but opinion does not pursue an object, or fly from it. The excellence of principle is goodness—that of opinion is truth.'—*Aristotle's Ethics*, III. 2.

and affections, of dying to sin and to the world. On the contrary, they carried the maxims and spirit of the world with them into their profession of Christianity. They thought that they could serve Christ by using the weapons of Satan; as if the kingdom of Christ were like a worldly kingdom, so that its interests were advanced by increasing its nominal dominion, instead of having for its object the putting down every evil thought and work; 'the kingdom of God is within us.' Hence arose what were called 'pious frauds,' that is, forgeries of books written by the Apostles, or by other distinguished Christians; forgeries of books in which the heathens were made to express their belief of Christianity; and in after times, forgeries of miracles, and all that train of lying signs and wonders with which the Church of Rome has laboured to advance the cause of Antichrist; as if it were possible for that man to be serving the kingdom of Christ, who, by lies, and falsehood, was at the same moment serving Satan; or, as if Satan was not well satisfied that his kingdom was really in no danger, so long as its principles and practices, no matter under what pretence, were adopted, even by those who called themselves his enemies. It is true that this, as well as the other wickedness of persecuting people on account of their religious opinions, is not now practised or defended in this country: but we have still amongst us some evils arising out of the same source,—the mistaking a false unity for the true one, a unity of form and opinion, for the union of spirit and faith. There are many persons, for instance, in our own Church, who dwell much more on the differences of form and opinion which exist between them and good dissenters, than on the unity of spirit between all those who love the Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity. It is, certainly, natural and proper, that one should feel more closely united towards those whose principles, and feelings, and opinions, are quite like our own; if indeed, such a

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marvellous agreement is anywhere to be found ; and, therefore, one may feel more closely drawn towards a very good and enlightened churchman than towards a very good and enlightened dissenter. But the evil is, that many persons feel more friendly disposed, I do not say to absolutely wicked, but to careless and unspiritual churchmen, than to zealous and holy dissenters ; and this is to undo Christ's work, to put an earthly and unimportant bond of union, in the place of that union of goodness and holiness, which was to bind men to one another in Him, and in his Father.

Again, persons are spoken of as friends to the Church, and are as such often regarded as having a common interest, as being on our side, if I may use the expression ; because they are zealous for the worldly establishment of the Church, while their whole lives and principles are so unchristian, that really to a thoughtful mind, the feeling towards them instead of that of union, is rather, 'what concord hath Christ with Belial?' On the other hand, people often indulge themselves in using the word *Methodist* as a term of reproach or censure, as if they might justly speak unfavourably of those who were dissenters from the Church ; while in fact they do speak against them from the very same feeling which has made worldly and careless persons always dislike a strict profession of life, because it naturally condemns themselves.

But Christ Himself hath taught us with whom we should feel united, and whom we should regard as not of our side. His disciples told Him once that they had seen a man casting out devils in His name, and they forbade him, because he followed not with them. But what was our Lord's answer?—'Forbid him not, for there is no man that can do a miracle in my name, that can lightly speak evil of me : for, he that is not against us is on our part.' So, then, he who worked by the Spirit of Christ, he was to be considered as one of us ; and so it is now. They who work by the



Spirit the fruits of a changed heart and of love towards Christ and to their brethren, they are indeed with us ; and to them should we feel bound in the ties of Christian unity, whether they follow with us outwardly or no ; whether they belong to the Church, or are dissenters. On the other side, Christ has said also, that many shall say to Him at the last day, ‘ Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name, and in thy name done many wondrous works ? ’ and that He will reply to them, ‘ I never knew you—depart from me, you that work iniquity.’ They are not Christ’s then, whether they be with us in the Church or no ; no, not though they are ever so zealous in what they call its interest, nor though their words and opinions may be in every point the same as our own, whose hearts and spirits are not renewed, who have not died to the world and the flesh, and bear upon them Christ’s true mark, ‘ Let every one that nameth the name of Christ depart from iniquity.’ ‘ I would that all spake with tongues,’ said the Apostle, ‘ but rather that ye all prophesied ; ’ even so I may say, ‘ I would that all of us held the same *opinions* in all matters relating to Christ’s Gospel ; but far rather that we all had the same principles, and lived in the same spirit ; ’ and, if we did this, our differences of opinion would be of small concern. Such, indeed, there must ever be among men : from this very place, in this very church, it may happen, perhaps, that different sentiments and different feelings are expressed <sup>1</sup> by the different ministers who preach here ; but what matters this, if in our principles and spirit we are united ; if we preach Christ crucified, and the renewal of our evil natures by Christ’s Holy Spirit ? Every one hath his proper gift of God, one after this manner, and another after that manner ; but in those who are really Christ’s, all these worketh that one and the same Spirit, dividing to every

<sup>1</sup> This was preached in a parish in which four different clergymen often performed the duty.

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man severally as he will. For there are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit; and there are differences of administrations, but the same Lord; and there are diversities of operations, but it is the same God that worketh all, and in all; and to that God who has revealed Himself to us as our Maker, our Redeemer, and our Sanctifier, as the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, may we all be ever united in the bonds of love to Him, and to one another.

## SERMON VIII.

‘YE SHALL SEE THEM AGAIN NO MORE  
FOR EVER.’

EXODUS xiv. 13.

*The Egyptians whom ye have seen to-day, ye shall see them again no more for ever.*

THESE words were spoken by Moses to the children of Israel, when they were come to the shore of the Red Sea, and when they saw the Egyptians close pursuing after them behind, and knew not how they should escape them. Moses then told them not to be afraid, but to stand still, and see the salvation of the Lord; for that all that great host which now looked so terrible with all its horses and its war-chariots, should in a few hours be utterly destroyed. They should see it again no more for ever; no more, that is, in its splendour and in its power; for we are told that they did see it again the next morning, but then in a condition totally different. Israel saw the Egyptians dead upon the sea-shore. The beach was covered with the dead bodies thrown up upon it by the returning water, with the bodies of men and horses, with the wrecks of armour, and clothing, and chariots. In such a state did Israel see the Egyptians; but they never saw them again in their pride and vigour;—they went down into the sea and the waters overwhelmed them; and there was not one of them left.

But the words of the text are capable of another and a more solemn sense, in which they are very often true to all of us. They may be well used to describe that everlasting parting which takes place every hour between thousands and thousands of the children of Adam. Many of us, I may say all of us, are continually seeing those whom we shall see again no more for ever. The accidents of life often separate two persons at a very early age, who may both live for many years afterwards, but who will never see each other any more. Never any more throughout all eternity. For, a parting which should only last through this life, has in it, in comparison, nothing solemn or affecting at all. The disciples, it is true, sorrowed greatly, when Paul told them that they should see his face again no more in this life: but they sorrowed not as men without hope, and they might look forward to be one with him for ever in God and in Christ. But many men part from their friends or neighbours, or fellow-creatures, every day with an eternal parting. They shall see them no more either in this world, or in the world to come. The children of God, when they arise at the last day, shall never see anything of those who have chosen their portion with the wicked: and even when two wicked men shall arise, they shall either not know each other at all, or if they do, their knowledge will only add to their misery. They will see each other as Israel saw the Egyptians, lost to all their former pride and greatness,—dead bodies and broken wrecks of what they once were,—heirs, the one together with the other, of the same intolerable misery.

I have often thought how greatly it is to be wished, that men would have a more lively sense of their neighbour's eternal prospects, as well as of their own; I mean, that they would think more practically how that every person of what condition soever with whom they have anything to do, is in a very short time to enter upon his

everlasting portion ; and will either be their companion for ever, or like the Egyptians, they will soon see him no more for ever. I say, it were to be wished, that people would think this practically : for I know that if we were to ask any one of this congregation what was to become of all those assembled here this day with himself, he would answer, that in a few years they would all be in a state of everlasting happiness or misery. We should all, I suppose, give this same answer instantly, if the question were put to us ; and yet in our common dealings with one another in the world, how little do we think of it ! Can any one ask what difference it would make in our behaviour, if we did think of it ? When we talk of such a man's advancement and great prosperity in life as of a matter of great congratulation to him ; and when, by so speaking, we confirm ourselves and those who hear us, in the habit of regarding worldly good things as things always good and desirable, do we ever consider, that in a few years all the good that his prosperity can do him, will certainly have passed away ; but that he may be suffering then and through all eternity from the mischiefs which it may have brought on him ? When a man is ill, and a foolish kindness in those about him gives him wine or rich food, to keep up his strength, as it is said, we cry out at their blindness, and wonder how they can so little regard their friend's real good. Yet to many men, I may say to most men, great worldly comforts and worldly prosperity are like rich meats to a person in a fever ; they are really a great mischief to them ; and so we should call them, if we thought as much in earnest of the welfare of our neighbours in another world, as we do of their bodily health in this.

Again, it is not uncommon to hear parents or relations, when they are in rather narrow circumstances, speak of it as a good thing, if any of their children have a disposition fitted, to use the common expression, to rough it, or to make

their own way in the world. It is said, indeed, that the kingdom of heaven is taken by violence; but the violence, or rather the active and earnest character which wins heaven, is not exactly of the same sort with that which wins riches and advancement on earth. The character which is said to be fit to make its own way in the world is bold and active indeed, and so far it is good; but it is generally hard, unscrupulous, and selfish, apt to push itself with little regard for the welfare of others, and with little consideration of the means by which it gains its object. It is impatient of wrong or of affront, understands the ways of the world, and follows them with little hesitation. I have thought, when parents part with a son of this description, when they see him go out into the world, in the hope that he will make his fortune, how very differently would they feel if they considered that very many times, he whom they are seeing this day, they shall see again no more for ever; that the very temper and qualities which fill them with pleasure, as an earnest of their child's worldly welfare, are in fact most to be lamented, as likely to bring about his everlasting ruin.

I will mention yet a third instance. We are all taught not to speak evil of one another, not to say anything that may hurt our neighbour's character, and so either injure his interests, or give pain to his feelings. The rules of courtesy in society carry these points to a very great length; and it is very properly thought rude to say anything that may needlessly even awaken unpleasant recollections in the mind of any one present, and much more, that may be likely to give offence. Yet many things which courtesy does not forbid, would be forbore by those who were as fearful of hurting their neighbour's everlasting interest, as of giving him a momentary pain, or inflicting on him a worldly inconvenience. How many a compliment would be repressed, as tending to encourage a vanity and self-satisfaction, that were too great already; how many a

hasty speech would be silenced, by which unchristian opinions, or an unchristian temper, may be thoughtlessly encouraged ; how many a false compliance of words and manner would be restrained, by which a good man sometimes, from an excessive fear of giving offence, allows the worldly and unprincipled to imagine that their estimate of life is the same with his own !

There is still one more case, which must not indeed be spoken of with harshness, yet in which we should do well to be careful of ourselves, and to suspect a little the natural leaning of our own feelings. Many persons who watch and govern their own conduct according to the highest principles of duty, who are active and unceasing in their own labours, are sometimes too much influenced by their human affection for others, and do not always encourage their friends so firmly as they should do, to tread the path on which Christ would lead them. There are those, who, if consulted in a case of practice by any dear friend, would for him, much more than for themselves, think of what would most gratify his present wishes, and would try to spare him the pain of present disappointment. There are those also, who would be too soon alarmed for the health, and strength, and comforts, of those whom they love ; who would urge their friend to spare himself, to take care of his health, to give himself indulgences of one kind or other, which they would not, in the like circumstances, consent to accept themselves. Of course to be too unfeeling and hard in our expectations of others is a much worse fault ; and it is a duty, as well as a pleasure, to be careful of the temporal as well as of the eternal welfare of those who are dear to us. All would be right, if we kept steadily before our eyes the time that comes after death—the time when we shall live with our friends for ever, or shall see them again no more. We should then indeed be careful of our neighbour's health and comfort ; we should say to him,

‘Do not do too much ;’ but we should also feel, and say too sometimes, ‘that he must not do too little.’ We must not, even out of love, make his path smoother than Christ has chosen to make it. We must cheer him to fight the good fight, even as we would wish ourselves to be cheered to it by him. Amongst soldiers, when fatigue and sufferings are pressing upon them, he is a true friend who tries by every sacrifice on his own part, to lessen the burdens of his weaker comrade : but if he sees his spirit yielding too much, so that he is in danger of losing himself by some act of weakness, then he rouses and encourages him to bear up bravely, and to remember his honour and his duty. Let us set the same predominant value on our friend’s eternal glory, that a brave soldier would set upon the military honour of a dear comrade ; and we too should see how to hold the middle course, neither being insensible to his earthly welfare and our own, nor yet forgetting that our mutual well-being after death concerns us both still more nearly.

But, my brethren, we are apt to deceive ourselves too often with regard to our friend’s everlasting prospects ; and this self-deceit arises, I fear, many times from the want of a sufficiently lively interest in the things of another world. I have felt on many occasions a very great and painful concern, to hear persons speaking of the state of their deceased relations as undoubtedly happy, to hear them talk of being united to them again for ever, when the lives of both had been and were such as would oblige an impartial man to regard their future condition with more of awe than of hope. Then, indeed, at the actual moment of sorrow, one cannot cruelly tear away the greatest consolation which grief possesses ; and besides, when the grave has once closed upon a relation or friend, fears and anxiety about his everlasting state would be mere hopeless misery to the survivor, and most unavailing to benefit the dead. But while we and our relations are yet alive, I wish that



we would bear steadily in our minds the only true foundation on which the hope of our eternal happiness can rest; that we would open our eyes to the exceeding vanity of those false assurances with which almost all persons comfort themselves after they have lost their relations; as if, indeed, every soul that was taken away from this world would be presented spotless before God, through the blood of the Lamb. Alas, my brethren, it is not because we love our friends here, that we can hope to love and live with them hereafter. In Heaven they neither marry, nor are given in marriage; that is, the ties of human relationship do not subsist there; for, if they did, we should feel the absence of those who were not in heaven; and though Christian parents and children, husbands and wives, brothers and sisters, will love one another more than they ever did on earth, yet they will love each other as the fellow-servants of God,—they will be all one with each other as members of Christ's body, of His glorious Church, the communion of saints, of the spirits of just men made perfect. It is very strongly and justly said by Doddridge, in that excellent work of his, 'The Rise and Progress of Religion in the Soul,' that at the last day, many good men who on earth have loved their wicked relations or friends, and have prayed for them, and striven to do them good, will then look upon them without any remains of affection or regard, and will see in them nothing but the enemies of God. Many, therefore, very many indeed, of our worldly attachments will be buried in the grave for ever. But instead of deceiving ourselves with fond hopes that we shall meet our friends in the kingdom of heaven, when we have not been fellow-workers here in the vineyard of God, nor have accepted together the promises of justification, let us now think of the many everlasting partings between dear friends which are happening every day, that we may labour for ourselves and our friends, to ensure an everlast-

ing union. Let us try to bring one another to Christ betimes, to cherish in one another every seed of God's grace, to lessen as best we can one another's temptations, and enkindle each the other to be earnest in well-doing without weariness. To encourage false hopes of salvation, whether for ourselves or for others, is the surest way to destroy the true ones. We cannot deliver our brother, nor make agreement unto God for him ; and if he has died in sin, or to speak more plainly, if he has not lived the life of the Son of God through faith, he is not gone to heaven, but we shall see him no more for ever. But he may safely talk of his friend's eternal happiness after his death, who could and did look forward to it, with habitual and reasonable joy, when he was in his full health and vigour. There are some persons, it is to be feared, with whom their relations never connect the notion of heaven, till the day is past in which they might have been fitted for it ; who were never in life considered as the heirs of that kingdom into which they are after death fondly hoped to have entered. But there are others, and happy are they who have many such among their friends and relations, in whom the heavenward bent of their minds, and the heavenly character of their actions, has long been visible ; whom we have seen in youth and health firmly and steadily treading that path, which, we may surely say at their departure, has now brought them into their rest. For such, when they are gone, there can be no uneasiness ; nor can the boldest hope half come up to those unutterable joys with which indeed their Lord has blessed them. Only for ourselves can we then feel anxiety, lest while they have safely passed over the raging waters, as members of the true Israel of God, we, while vainly hoping to follow them, should be overthrown in the midst of the sea ; for the way which was opened to the faithful by Him who first trod it

Himself, so that they go through on dry ground, will be closed up and impassable to those who have not been guided by the pillar of fire, the light of God's holy word, nor have followed the steps of their leader, their Saviour, and Redeemer.

## SERMON IX.

‘HE COULD THERE DO NO MIGHTY WORK.’

ST. MARK vi. 5, 6.

*And he could there do no mighty work, save that he laid his hands upon a few sick folk, and healed them. And he marvelled, because of their unbelief.*

THIS text contains two remarkable instances, in a short space, of the manner in which the feelings and circumstances of men are ascribed to God in the Scriptures. It is said of Him who is Almighty, that He *could* there do no mighty work : it is said of Him to whom all things were known, that He marvelled because of their unbelief. It is very easy to see, that these expressions are mere figures of speech ; that Christ did not want the power to do miracles at Nazareth ; but that there were some such strong reasons for His not doing them, that it was therefore impossible for Him to work any : that He did not really marvel at their unbelief, but that it was so strange and so unreasonable, that any one except Him to whom all hearts are open, might fairly have wondered at it.

But it is not on this account that I have chosen for my text this passage of the Scripture : it contains another and much more important lesson. When it says, that Christ could do no mighty work in Nazareth because of the unbelief of the people, it shows us how our sins defeat the gracious purposes of God towards us, how we hinder Him in a manner, from doing what He wishes to do for our good :

how we make it impossible for Him to avoid punishing us, although He has no pleasure at all in the death of the wicked, but rather that he should turn from his ways and live.

I know nothing that can express more strongly, how certain it is that evil will be punished; nothing which more completely overthrows all those fond hopes which some people pretend to build upon the mercy of God, as if He would not utterly destroy the wicked, but would make good prevail over evil at the last. On the contrary, God represents His own merciful designs as being rendered of no effect by man's wickedness. He sent his Son into the world to die for us; but there are some of us who make Him to have died for them in vain. He sent him to do miracles, in order to convince the people that He was truly sent from God; but there were some so hard in unbelief, that it was impossible for Him to work miracles among them. He wept over Jerusalem, and desired to gather her children together under His protection, to save them from the wrath to come. He would, but they would not; and the rebellious will of man is thus said to have disappointed and turned aside the gracious will of God. It is in this manner, as I think, that the promises of God in the Scripture are to be understood as conditional; He will give us good things if we will do our part; not if we neglect it or do the contrary to it. Most certainly God could overrule every heart, that it should desire and do nothing but what was agreeable to His will. But the question is, not what God can do, which it would be blasphemy to ask, but what He thinks fit to do, according to those laws which He fixed beforehand, when He first made man upon the earth. Doubtless, God could have turned the hearts of Eli's sons, that they should have walked before Him faithfully; and thus the promise made to their house, that they should walk before Him for ever,

might have been accomplished. But He left them to follow their own will, and that will was to do evil: and therefore He told Eli, ‘I said indeed, that thy house, and the house of thy father, should walk before me for ever; but now the Lord saith, Be it far from me; for them that honour me, I will honour, and they that despise me, shall be lightly esteemed.’ And there is an instance of this manner of God’s dealings with men, which I shall mention, because it is, perhaps, one of the most striking in the whole Bible. It is said, that God promised to give the whole land of Canaan to the Israelites; and after the death of Joshua, when the tribe of Judah went out to war in order to complete their conquest, it is said, ‘The Lord was with Judah, and he drove out the inhabitants of the mountain, but could not drive out the inhabitants of the valley, because they had chariots of iron.’—Judges i. 19. I pass over the foolish cavil, of equal foolishness with most of those which have been raised against the Scriptures, as if the writer of this verse meant to say, that the Canaanites, with their chariots of iron, were too strong for the Almighty God. But what he does mean to say is this, that the Israelites were so frightened by the strong resistance of these Canaanites, that their faith failed them; they were like Peter walking on the sea, who, when he saw the wind boisterous, was afraid, although Christ Himself was by: and, therefore, because of his unbelief, Peter began to sink in the water, and the Israelites were beaten and repulsed by their enemies. So then, God could do no mighty work; that is, He could not, according to those laws which He Himself has made; and by which He will not give His mercy to man, if man persists in showing himself averse and disobedient.

These, however, were the old times, in which signs and wonders were wrought, which we must not expect to see now. The days of miracles are past, and whether our

faith be strong or weak we may think, is, on that account, of small concern. But God has, in fact, mighty works to do in every age ; mighty works of mercy and loving-kindness to His people, if their unbelief does not shut up their course. Even now, amongst us, in this very country, why is the mighty work of raising up God's kingdom upon earth, of changing the evil and stubborn hearts of men into good and obedient, of bringing every thought, and word, and deed, into the obedience of Christ ; why is this mighty work stopped, and why has it been stopped, ever since the knowledge of Christ was first brought to this island ? Why is it, that Christ can but lay His hands here and there upon a few sick folk, and heal them ?—a few who know their wants, and go with faith to Him, the great Physician of their souls ? It is, because of our unbelief : an unbelief which might well excite our wonder, if we considered only what sort of fruit God might justly expect to find in His vineyard, and were not become familiar from long habit with the wild grapes, the thorns, and the briers, which it indeed does actually bear.

When I speak of the mighty work of God's kingdom being stopped among us, I allude to those glorious pictures of the growth and happy state of Christ's Church, which occur so often in the prophecies. 'Nation shall<sup>1</sup> not lift

<sup>1</sup> A poem written by Mr. Coleridge, and first published, I believe, in the *Annual Anthology*, after alluding to the words spoken by the angels to the shepherds, when they announced the birth of our Lord, 'Peace on earth, good will towards men ;' concluded with the following stanza :

'Strange prophecy ! If all the screams  
Of all the men who since have died  
To realize war's kingly dreams,  
Had risen at once in one vast tide,  
The choral song of that blest multitude  
Had been o'erpowered and lost amid the uproar rude.'

This stanza has been omitted in the poem, as more recently published by its author in the '*Sibylline Leaves*,' from an impression, I

up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more.’ And yet from the time of Christ down to our own generation, has not the earth been filled with violence ; and have not war and bloodshed enjoyed as great a dominion as ever ? For when God said, ‘ Nation shall not lift up sword against nation,’ He did not mean to put any force upon the evil will of man, but only to hold out to him such happy tidings of reconciliation with Himself, and such bright hopes of everlasting peace and joy in heaven, that it might reasonably be supposed none would scorn them, and none would neglect them ; but that, being full of peace and hope towards God, they would all also be at peace with one another. And He declared Himself ready on His part, to take off the curse which had been laid on the earth for Adam’s sin ; to do away with all natural evil as soon as man should turn from the evil of his own heart. Here was a mighty work to be performed, which God was in a manner waiting to perform. But He could not, because of man’s unbelief. The moral evil was not cured, the lusts that continued to struggle within us, brought forth their old fruit of wars and fightings ; man remained such as he was before ; and therefore the order of nature was left unchanged too ; the earth brings forth as of old, its thorns and its thistles ; poverty and pain, and sickness and labour are still the lot to which we are born ; and we are still waiting with unsatisfied eyes, for the day when the kingdom of God will be revealed. So then, God suppose, that it might be regarded as irreverent. But, if the ‘ strangeness ’ had been ascribed not to the prophecy, but to the conduct of mankind, who have rendered fruitless the means of grace offered them ; and have refused that peace, temporal as well as spiritual, which the Gospel of the Prince of Peace, if really accepted, must necessarily have ensured—the powerful language of the lines would accord exactly with the tone of the Scripture, in representing the dreadful contrast between the promises of God, made on the supposition that men could not but avail themselves of the blessings given them, and the actual state of the world, because, in fact, they have rejected them.



could do no mighty work amongst us because of our unbelief.

Again, as a nation, God has visibly declared His will to do us good. We have been delivered from the falsehoods and idolatries of the church of Rome. We have been delivered also from that yoke of civil tyranny which pressed upon our forefathers. God's word has free course amongst us; and so also have all the various writings of men. Every man may think as he will, and speak as he will, and teach as he will. But have the fruits which have appeared amongst us been answerable to our full means and knowledge? Is the mass of happiness enjoyed amongst us anything equal to the causes and means of happiness which have been placed within our reach? With all our opportunities of knowing God's will, has the holiness of our lives been answerable to them? With all our knowledge, worldly and spiritual, how often have we been led away, people and government together, by some mischievous dreams of ambition, or pride, or selfishness, from which our worldly interest has suffered, as well as the greater interests of our souls? Without going into a detail which would lead me into subjects unfitted for this place, I am convinced that any well-informed and sensible man, who would carefully study the present state of our country, would find, that almost all the evils amongst us are owing to our own sins, or neglect of our opportunities; and that, in short, the abundant current of God's mercy towards us has been in many ways checked and turned aside by our unbelief and disobedience.

But now to come to individual cases which after all concern us each most nearly. What is it that hinders us individually from finding in the Gospel all that we ought to find in it, or from experiencing in life a greater share of those comforts which God has promised to give to His people? What is it which makes us, for instance, so often

leave this place unimproved, or come to it with a dull and careless spirit, as to a weekly task, or at best a familiar form? What is become of the blessings which Christ has promised upon our hearty prayers; or of His assurance, that where two or three are gathered together in His name, there is He in the midst of them? What should become of them, when we come here in a spirit of unbelief, so that our prayers are anything but the prayers of faith? I mean by a spirit of unbelief, not any doubts about this or that doctrine of Christianity, still less about the truth of Christianity itself, but a want of a true lively sense of the reality of what we are engaged in; a conviction that God as surely hears us, as we are uttering our prayers to Him; that Jesus Christ is as truly interceding for us at the right hand of God, as we are praying for ourselves in the church; that the Holy Spirit will as actively aid and enliven us in our devotions, as we are kneeling on our knees and offering them up with our lips. This is the faith which is wanting to us; a faith which would make the service of the Church as much a matter of real and earnest business, as any request which we may put to one of our neighbours as soon as we leave the church. If we were to say to ourselves before we set out from our homes, 'Now I am going to speak to my Maker, in company with my brethren: we are all of us together going to tell Him what we want, and to say how much we all love and honour Him. We are going also to hear Him speak to us, and tell us what He wishes us to do, and assure us again what He means to do for us. Since I was last in His house, I know, for my own part, that I have thought of Him much less than I should have done. I have done things which He does not like, and left undone what He commands; I have therefore much to say to Him, and I must ask Him more earnestly to guard me from evil for the time to come, that I may love Him more and serve Him better.'

If we were to say and think to ourselves something of this sort, we should regard our coming hither more as a matter of real business, as a thing in which a great deal was to be done, rather than as a weekly ceremony, which we do not like to omit, though we find it sometimes rather tedious and unmeaning. Of course it is unmeaning to him who joins in it without faith; as unmeaning as if the service were still, as in the Roman Catholic Church, read in a great degree in Latin. But God cannot make His good things plain to us if our hearts are hardened; nor can He show forth in us the mighty works of His grace, if He finds in us nothing but a dull and evil heart of unbelief.

There are other promises also made to us in the Gospel of which we too often deprive ourselves through our unbelief. When Christ told His disciples to take no thought for the morrow; to seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all other things should be added unto them; He laid before them a sure road to happiness. To persuade them to follow it, He told them of the watchful care of God over them, which they might well believe, since not even a sparrow could fall to the ground without their Father: but, as for them, even the very hairs of their head were all numbered. I do not think that we cast our cares upon God half as much as He allows and encourages us to do; that we are enough satisfied, that if we do seek first the kingdom of God, that all other things shall be added unto us; or, in St. Paul's words, that all things work together for good for them that love God. With regard to the first, it is surely our wisdom not to be troubling ourselves with what may happen hereafter, so long as we are doing at present what is pleasing in the sight of God. We may indeed, sometimes, form plans for the future; but of how much anxiety would it relieve us, if we left our plans with God, to dispose of them as He thought best, in the certain faith that He would decide

them as was best for us? And for the other—the one lesson that should be fixed deeply on the hearts of us all from our earliest childhood; above all, that should be cherished as the only guide to our conduct at that perilous moment when we are first entering upon the business of life, should be the command to seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness. How safely, and steadily, and boldly, should we then walk, with no turnings to the right or the left, none of those struggles which perplex the double-minded man, while striving to make his duty suit with his own desires: instead of doing his duty first, and praying to God to make his heart and desires conformable with it. The question then with regard to our future business in life would be, not what is most pleasant, or in what shall we gain most profit; but rather, for what are we most fitted, and in what shall we be most likely to fulfil the purposes of God, in giving us the power of choice? That our worldly happiness would be best promoted by entering upon the world with such a spirit, is as certain as that it is the only path to the happiness that is beyond the grave. If the common proverb be true, that ‘Honesty is the best policy,’ much more may the same be said of a principle far more extensive than mere honesty, and which most naturally draws towards itself the respect and goodwill of every man: to say nothing of the happiness of moderate wishes and subdued passions, which every man understands as far as he has in any degree experienced them. But of this sure method of sweetening the cup of life we deprive ourselves through our unbelief. We will not trust God with our happiness, but rather seek to make it out our own way. We know well enough that it is not the kingdom of God which men seek commonly in the first place. And, therefore, because of our unbelief, God cannot work the mighty works which He designs for us; He cannot free us from the worst evils of life; He cannot

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as He would, make the world less the scene of weariness and vexation of spirit, than so many now find it to be. As of old, He does but heal a few; those who believe in Him and take Him at his word, and find the blessing which He promised: while so many look upon His promises with unbelief, and not choosing to seek God in the way in which He may be found, complain that He has forgotten to be gracious, and through their own fault make the complaint in their own case true.

## SERMON X.

*THE VALLEY OF THE SHADOW OF DEATH.*

MATTHEW xxvi. 38.

*Jesus said unto them, My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death :  
tarry ye here, and watch with me.*

THE sorrow which our Lord felt at the time when He spoke these words, was the beginning of that great inward suffering which is commonly called His Agony. It is described in three out of the four Gospels, and it appears to have been the severest part of the trial which Christ underwent for our sakes. St. Luke says, that in the midst of it there appeared an angel unto Him from heaven, strengthening Him ; and that, being in an agony, He prayed more fervently ; and His sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground. This was not recorded merely to add an interest to the story ; there is no appearance in any of the Gospels of an endeavour to work upon the feelings of the reader ; but it was mentioned to give us some sort of notion of the impression produced upon our Saviour's mind, by the thought of the evil which existed in the world, and of the awful power of death over so large a portion of the human race. It shows too, in a very striking manner, how completely Christ was made like unto us, and how truly He felt those human fears and shrinkings at the approach of extreme suffering, which all must feel, however

much they may be enabled to struggle with success against them. The reality of His sufferings sets forth more clearly the greatness of His love. No man took His life from Him, but He laid it down of Himself; and even while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.

Many persons, from natural constitution, or from the weakness produced by disease, or from not fully comprehending the freeness of Christ's redemption, are troubled with an excessive fear of death, even whilst those around them have every reason to believe, that death, whenever it visits them, will to them be gain. Many persons, also, have been oppressed with these fears, and with most miserable feelings of being forsaken by God, even up to the very moment of their quitting the body. The death-bed of the just is not always peaceful; nor the prospect of heaven granted beforehand to everyone who will be suffered at last to enjoy it in reality. Yet so weak is our faith, that we would fain have something of a sight of our promised glory, even before our trial time is over: we can make up our minds to the sight of good men suffering not only from outward misfortunes, but from inward fears and anxieties, so long as the clouds are rolled away a little on this side of the grave, and the last moments of their stay upon earth are a visible foretaste of the blessedness of heaven. So indeed they are often—perhaps most often; but they are not so always; nor ought we to expect it either for ourselves or others. It is therefore, to my mind, a most gracious instance of our Lord's exceeding love to us, that He Himself drank the cup of human suffering to the very bottom; that no servant of Christ's can fear his death so painfully, or feel himself so forsaken and miserable, whilst actually undergoing it, as his Master did before him. The thought of death, before it came to pass, affected Him even to agony; and in the hour of death itself, instead of feeling any foretaste of His coming glory, He uttered those

memorable words of the deepest misery, 'My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me!' This then is one use which we may draw from the account of Christ's agony, before death, and in death;—to assure ourselves that a peaceful end of their mortal life is not the appointed portion of all God's servants, and to prevent us from despairing or doubting of the salvation of the good man, because God's countenance was hidden from him on earth, even to the last. And, for ourselves also, should it please our Lord to afflict us with this most severe trial, it may somewhat help to support us under it, if while we were yet in our health and strength, we were continually to call to mind that Christ Himself had borne the same. 'In all our affliction he was afflicted;' and as He endured poverty with the poor, persecution with the oppressed, contempt with the humble and despised, and death in common with all; so did He also endure the worst afflictions of our nature—intense fear of death, and intense feelings of misery while He was undergoing it.

But they are His own words, 'If they do these things in a green tree, what shall be done in the dry?' If death was so fearful and so miserable a thing to Him who was without sin, what shall it be to those who must suffer it with all the added bitterness of sin, which is called, especially, the sting of death? This also is a second use to be drawn from the consideration of Christ's agony, to teach us something of the grievous pangs which await the sinner. It is said, indeed, that the wicked man has often no bonds in his death; that is, that he dies to all appearance easily and peaceably, as if he were but entering on an everlasting sleep. But the sting of what Christ suffered, as it proves to us that great fears and troubles of mind are no sign of God's displeasure, so may it also teach us, that a calm and fearless death is no mark of His love. 'The rich man died, and was buried;' with nothing perhaps to



pain or to alarm him ; by a mild disease, it may be, and with an unawakened and, therefore, an untroubled conscience : with no suffering to his body, nor any terror to his mind. ‘ But in hell he lift up his eyes, being in torments.’ But one moment’s space, and he was awakened to a sense of his misery, which he could never lose again. The forbearance of God was at an end, and the day of His wrath was come ; of that indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish, which will surely fall on every soul of man that doeth evil, and which will burn like an unquenchable fire for ever.

But, whether our death be easy or painful, it is appointed unto all men once to die. This everyone knows, so that each person may think he can gain nothing by hearing it repeated. But I imagine, that although we know that we shall die, yet that we who move about in health and strength, have a very faint and imperfect notion of what death is. Indeed, it is not more concealed from our sight than it is shut out from our minds. People fancy that there is a melancholy about the subject which makes them uncomfortable, and therefore they drive it from them. But there is a great difference between seriousness and melancholy : the latter, indeed, does no man good, but the want of the former is the cause of half the sins of which we are guilty. To think on death would make us serious ; but it need not and ought not to make us melancholy. Nor would it, if we accustomed ourselves to it sufficiently ; for we should then see it as it really is, a solemn and awful passage indeed ; but one which leads to so great a state of blessing, that when viewed soberly and at a distance, the good of it ought to swallow up the evil. But if men purposely keep themselves from thinking of it till it actually comes upon them, they will either be overwhelmed then with fear and misery, or if they harden themselves against it, their hardness will be but the blind folly of

wickedness, which puts off all fear of God till the time of His judgment is come; and the fear, when it is felt, is useless to save us from it.

Let us then place before our minds for a little while a picture of that state to which we must all come, and from which we know not how short a time may yet separate us. Probably some of those who now hear me have never seen anyone after death, nor ever witnessed the changes which take place before it. These last, indeed, must in many respects be often very different; yet there are some circumstances sufficiently common, to be considered as part of that state which we must all one day experience. We must expect to find our minds greatly altered; sometimes, indeed, by absolute delirium, but oftener by the weakness and restlessness attendant on disease. The mere confinement to a sick-room, and the sights of gloom and grief by which we are surrounded when our condition becomes hopeless, are enough, when acting upon a weakened body, to unfit the mind for the calm and free exercise of its faculties. Repentance under such circumstances is almost impossible: we may be frightened, confused, overpowered with a multitude of various feelings, but we are not enough masters of ourselves to gain then a true hatred of sin, or to be able to form deliberate resolutions of turning to God in sincerity and earnestness. Our prayers are the mere prayers of fear, and are therefore of no value; as the time is passed when fear might have been the beginning of wisdom. Many times also we are altogether insensible before our death, or sensible only to the gradual sinking of the powers of life within us. What is felt in the very last struggle, indeed, we cannot know till we feel it: but, if any consciousness still remains in us, it must then demand all the faith of the firmest Christian not to shrink at the thought of being torn for ever from all that he has seen or known, and entering at once upon a new world, of which no human

experience can tell him anything. His body he knows will be put into the ground, and changed into dust; and he cannot fancy any life without the body. If he thinks again of those around him, from whose love he is about to be parted, there must ever be a painful anxiety, whether his unworthiness or theirs may not hinder their future meeting in heaven. Some of them may be of characters so little formed, that, humanly speaking, it must be completely uncertain whether the good or evil will finally prevail in them; many again whom we have loved for their kindness to ourselves, may be yet very far from that holiness which is required by Him who seeth not as man seeth. Or if the dying man be one who has been little used to think of any thing out of this life, how bitter must it be to find himself taken away from all its schemes and enjoyments; his hopes for the future, and his happiness for the present, at once cut short for ever. There are also many cases, in which the sufferings of a death-bed are increased by poverty, or the neglect of those about us; when it is plain that our loss will be felt rather as a relief than as a misfortune, and the coldness with which we are waited on, seems almost to reproach us for continuing to cause trouble, by delaying to die.

Considering then how many of our fellow creatures are left in their last moments without any comforts, either to their bodies or to their souls, and how many more are hindered by pain and weakness from enjoying them when offered: the thought of death presents us indeed with a sad picture; and we can well understand how death should be put together with sin, as one of the great enemies by which mankind is assailed. It would be vain to say that we can by any means escape all its bitterness; most certainly we cannot: but we *can* make this bitterness only a brief suffering of a few days or weeks, instead of the beginning of a miserable eternity. This we

may gain, with God's blessing, by thinking seriously and frequently upon it. It is well said in an old epitaph—

Whoso him bethought  
Inwardly and oft,  
How sore it were to flit  
From life into the pit,  
From pit into pain  
Which ne'er shall cease again,  
He would not do one sin  
All the world to win.

But it is thinking 'inwardly and oft,' that is, heartily and sincerely, as well as often. We talk of death often enough, but not as if it were a thing of the greatest consequence in the world; most certainly sure, and for aught we know, most awfully near. We have not died with Christ in that death unto sin which takes away the worst sting of natural death; the worst sting, though not the only one. The wise and the foolish virgins were all overcome by sleep together; while the bridegroom tarried, they all slumbered and slept: but when they awoke, the one were ready in a moment—the others were utterly unprepared, and had no time then in which to prepare themselves. So it is with the servants of Christ, and with the wicked. All must go through the valley of the shadow of death together; but those who had made provision beforehand for their journey, through the sanctification of the Spirit, although it might not free them from all pains and fears on the passage, yet, as soon as it was passed, they would feel the benefit of it. He who has died with Christ during his lifetime; who, to use St. Paul's expression, has always borne about with him in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus; has nothing to fear in the hour of death beyond mere bodily suffering, or the fears which bodily weakness alone occasions.

It becomes us, then, to accustom ourselves to con-

sider death as something real, to make it a part of every day's serious thoughts, to bring steadily before our eyes the possibility that before the day closes which has now begun, it may be near, even at the doors. Will it be said that such thoughts would unfit us for our common business, or at least would stop all cheerfulness, and mark our countenances with a perpetual expression of gloom? Then we must still be in bondage to the weak and beggarly elements; we must be ignorant of that liberty which Christ has given us; or else our mirth and our pleasure, and our business, must be such as Christ would condemn; and in that case, we must, at whatever cost, get rid of them. But as whatever is not of faith is sin, so whatever is of faith is acceptable to God. I mean that he who believes himself in sincerity to be labouring in his Master's service; who believes also, that it is the privilege of a quiet conscience to give a cheerful countenance, and that some rest and relaxation are required by our natures; he would no more fear death at one time than at another—no more when cheerful than when most serious—no more in his moments of permitted relaxation, than amidst his gravest and hardest hours of labour. To be sure, if we were to ask ourselves continually, whether we should like to be summoned into the presence of God from the midst of such and such occupations, it would make us more careful of our time; it would hinder us from making a business of our amusements, or from indulging in anything at any time which encourages in us an unchristian temper or feelings. But this is just what it ought to do, and if it did so, it might save many from the broad and easy way of destruction, in which they now walk so heedlessly. For most certainly that is no fit employment, and no Christian relaxation, in which we should be afraid to die: but either it is wrong in itself, or it takes up too much time, or it encourages in us a spirit of sloth, or pride, or carelessness. If it does none of these,

and if it be pursued with thankfulness, as the gift of God, then the thought of death need not disturb or sadden it; we may go to it without scruple from our most solemn thoughts and prayers; and we may be called from it without fear, if such be the will of God, to the pangs of the most sudden death.

## SERMON XI.

## ‘THE BONDAGE OF CORRUPTION.’

ROMANS viii. 22, 23.

*We know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now; and not only they, but ourselves also, who have the first-fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body.*

IF what are considered the difficult parts of Scripture could neither be understood with any certainty after all the pains that we had taken with them, nor were capable of affording any practical good if we did understand them, then indeed it would be very improper to choose such parts as the subject of what we have to say in the pulpit. But if they are of such a kind, as to be difficult only to those who have never studied them; if they require no books or learning to understand them, but merely the plain sense of a thoughtful Christian, seeking with prayers for the aid of the Holy Spirit, to understand what is the mind of the Spirit declared in the Scriptures; and if they are very capable of making us know our own condition more justly, and teaching us to compare our feelings and conduct with what they ought to be; then I think that they may be very fitly taken as our subjects from this place; and that if anyone of our hearers is brought by what we say to a more profitable understanding of any part of God’s word, we need not consider our choice a foolish one.

The words of the text are taken out of the Epistle to the Romans ; a part of the Scripture, of which it would be vain to deny the difficulty altogether, although I cannot but think that it has been often unjustly magnified : and certainly if it were much greater than it is, yet the surpassing excellence of this epistle well deserves that we should take the greatest possible pains to understand it. In the eighth chapter, the Apostle dwells at some length on the condition in which Christians are placed. Amongst other things he says, that what has happened to their Lord, is an exact counterpart of what is to happen to them. Christ has gone through a term of humiliation and sufferings, during which He was supported by the hope of eternal glory. He died, and after that He entered into His glory. Such is the case with His disciples ; they are to have their term of hope and of suffering, before they enter into their rest. Their state is in a manner midway between the ignorance and low principles of other men, and the perfect happiness and glory which they may expect hereafter. They are not taken out of the world, nor delivered from all its evils, although they are enabled to bear them better than others. The world is a scene of confessed imperfection, or in St. Paul's own words, the earnest expectation of the creature, or of all created things, waiteth for the manifestation of the sons of God : that is, for the time when good men shall be openly owned by God as His children, and shall be taken to live with their Father for ever. Meanwhile, till that time arrives, the creature, or the creation, has been made subject to vanity ; it has been put under the bondage of corruption, with only the hope of a future deliverance. The Apostle means that we all, even the best among us, feel from our very infancy, that we are not what we ought to be ; that we cannot be good without a painful struggle ; that a thousand slothful and selfish feelings stand in the way of our cheerful obedience



to the will of our heavenly Father. When I say that we all feel this, I need hardly observe, that I speak only of those who think at all about themselves. Some, I fear, there are, who are so utterly lost in their degraded state, that they are quite insensible to it, and who have no more care about their souls, and scarcely any higher principles of conduct, than the beasts which perish. But it is surely true of all who think or feel at all, that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now ; and it is most certainly true of Christians who deserve the name, that although they have received the first-fruits of the Spirit, they groan within themselves, waiting for the adoption ; that is, for the time when God will openly adopt and own them for His sons, and when He will give them incorruptible bodies, fit to partake of His own immortality. For, says the Apostle, ' We are saved in hope ; ' I speak often of a man being saved by becoming a Christian ; but I mean that he is saved not actually and in enjoyment, but in hope ; the very expression then shows that we have not reached our salvation ; ' for what a man seeth, why doth he yet hope for ? ' During the state of hope, and of unsatisfied longings for something more perfect than what we see or know, Christ's promise is fulfilled, and the Comforter is continually with us ; directing our prayers, and disposing our hearts more and more, to a fitness for our future abode in heaven. He makes the very trials which surround us turn to our good : out of ill-treatment he brings meekness ; out of poverty and sickness, patience and resignation ; out of the snares of prosperity, self-denial ; and out of every earthly affliction, a greater desire for our heavenly rest. For God has not neglected us in any part of our pilgrimage ; He has called us, in the first instance, to the knowledge of His grace in Christ Jesus ; He has justified or acquitted us from all our past sins ; and, having strengthened and perfected us by His Spirit, He

finally brings us into glory. Thus far I have but followed the words of the Apostle in the seven or eight verses immediately after the text, because I wished to give a connected view of the whole of this part of his epistle. We observe, then, that he speaks of our being actually in this life in a condition of great imperfection, continually struggling with evil, and conscious of it; but aided by the Holy Spirit helping our infirmities, till being sufficiently purified and perfected, we become indeed the sons of God, partakers of His holiness, and therefore of His happiness.

It must be, I think, a useful exercise to lay before our eyes these splendid pictures of the promises that are set before us, and of the manner in which God prepares us for the enjoyment of them. It ought too to be profitable to us to observe the language in which St. Paul speaks of the state of things around us, and especially to ask ourselves whether there is any feeling in our own bosoms which answers to it, or whether we do not rather shrink from it as wild and extravagant? When St. Paul says, 'We know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now; and not only they, but ourselves also groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, that is, for the redemption of our bodies;' it would be in vain to deny that many, that most men, I fear, have no such sentiments; and that instead of groaning within themselves, waiting for the hour of their redemption, they rather dread its approach, and bestow their lamentations upon the hasty flight of time, which is every moment bringing them nearer to it. In fact our common feelings are well shown by our common language: death is still spoken of with terror, and length of days is still eagerly wished for, and far from groaning over the evil state of the world around us, we only regret that it is so fast fading away from us. The bondage of corruption has so thoroughly

degraded us, that we are well content to remain in it; and the glorious liberty of the children of God, when all goodness will be entirely easy and natural to us, is a prospect which awakens no desire in our minds to gain it. Yet, in very truth, the words of the Apostle are not overstrained; they are the very words of truth and soberness, although we, like Festus, unable to comprehend anything so pure and excellent, are disposed to call him mad for uttering them. For let a man once in earnest try to do the will of God, and the bondage of corruption will be soon sufficiently felt. If we were but for one day to take hearty pains to please our Maker and to deny ourselves, we should have abundant occasion to groan over our degraded condition. The painful struggle which we should have within us, when we strove to turn our thoughts to God and Christ; the fondness with which we should fly back to self-indulgence and to our ordinary feelings of interest, or indolence, or pride, or pleasure, would tell us that there was enough to make us groan in the difficulties which we found in doing what we ought to do; and would make us think with more serious delight of that blessed state when we shall be good without an effort.

Or if from ourselves we turned our eyes to our neighbours and to the world in general, our impression would become still stronger. Think for one moment of our being immortal creatures, 'travelling between life and death,'<sup>1</sup> and the strange inconsistency of men's ordinary actions, language, and feelings, strikes us as almost monstrous. If, when we see persons dancing, we stop our ears for an instant, so as to shut out the sound of the music, the movements which before seemed graceful and natural, become at once nothing but ridiculous; and the dancers appear like persons bereft of reason, moving backwards and forwards without any

<sup>1</sup> A being breathing thoughtful breath,

A traveller betwixt life and death. WORDSWORTH.

apparent object. Even so, if we stop our ears for a moment to the perpetual din of the world which harmonises so well with the occupation of its inhabitants ; if we look on calmly upon the various scenes that take place every day in every parish and in every house, how strange and unmeaning will the conduct of mankind appear ! What words, what occupations, what pleasures for those who are on the way to eternal life or eternal misery ! and whose own behaviour every day is to determine which of the two will be their portion. We should say, indeed, that the whole creation might well groan and travail in pain for the degradation in which it was plunged ; and that if it did not do so, it was only the greater object of compassion, as being lost to the sense of its own evil. For although the actual occupation in which many men are engaged is in itself the very line of their duty ; yet they themselves make it unworthy of an heir of immortality by the spirit with which they enter on it. Earthly things are precious, when we use them as the materials with which we may build up for ourselves a heavenly habitation ; and the humblest and most ordinary trade or employment may be carried on with such a temper and such a heart, that it may advance us daily on our way to heaven ; and the angels themselves may behold us engaged in it with respect and love. But when pursued only for its own sake, without a single thought or hope reaching beyond it, and the practice of it sullied with all the unworthy principles and bad passions of the world, then what was before sound and wholesome, becomes at once corrupt and injurious, like the manna, which although given by God for the support of His people in their way through the wilderness, yet bred worms and became loathsome, so soon as it was not used according to the will of its Giver.

Such passages of Scripture as that which I have chosen for my text, are in fact among the most useful touchstones

by which the state of our hearts may be at once determined. Setting aside some few points in which difference of time and country, and national character, may produce some difference also in ourselves, it is clear that in the main the feelings and principles of true Christians in all ages of the world must resemble one another. When St. Paul says that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now, there is no reason why his words should not apply to the present times as well as to his own ; and we have seen that in fact they do so apply. When he says that even we who have received the first-fruits of the Spirit, groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, that is, for the redemption of our body, it is still more plain that our case is the same as his ; that we have not at any rate received a larger measure of the Spirit than he had ; that our lives are not so much more heavenly and perfect than his as to leave us no reason to long, as he did, for the time when we should be more perfect. Either then we should feel as he felt, or we are not better, but much worse than he was, and we do not understand at all the true state in which we are living. If indeed we could be persuaded to observe the expression of the feelings of our Lord and His Apostles throughout the New Testament, and quietly to examine ourselves whether we felt at all as they did, it would go, I should think, some way to shock us, and to make us perceive how very, very far, we are from belonging to the kingdom of God.

I know that some will say that it is to our actions rather than to our feelings that we should look with anxiety ; and that many who talk of their rapturous love of heavenly things, are in fact as much the slaves of earthly things as any of their neighbours. Many who talk of their love of heaven may indeed be no better than other men, or even worse ; but not many who really have the love of God and do not talk about it. There is all the difference in

the world between talking about feeling, and feeling in reality; and in spiritual matters as in others, it is very often he who talks the loudest that feels the least. But I am speaking of people examining themselves, to see what is the state of their hearts towards God, not trying to put on an appearance of religion to deceive both themselves and their neighbours. And as to looking to actions rather than to feelings, no Christian would make an opposition between them : because, as there can be no goodness of life without goodness of principle, so neither can there be any goodness of principle that deserves the name, without its being shown in goodness of life.

It is true, also, that the Scriptures furnish us with touchstones in abundance, both for our conduct and our feelings; but in our Church and in our country there are few in comparison who are in danger of becoming wild talkers about religion; but there are a great many who flatter themselves that their conduct is all as it should be, though their feelings and those of Christ and His Apostles should be as different from one another as light and darkness. Now that their conduct is not what it should be, is quite plain to all real Christians; but they fancy that all is right, that some of the precepts of the Gospel which they least relish were intended for other times and other circumstances; and that they are leading useful lives, and so are practising God's commandments. Such persons should be earnestly entreated to read the language of our Lord and his Apostles, and then think if it finds any answering feelings in their own bosoms. If, instead of waiting for the redemption of their bodies, with a constant sense of their own great imperfections and those of the world around them, they consider such feelings as wild and unnatural, and are no way anxious to arrive at a state where goodness and peace will live in every heart without alloy and without an effort, let them

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think why it is that they feel so differently; and the inquiry, if honestly pursued, will end in their answering, that it is because St. Paul and they are of a different spirit; that while he was renewed in heart by the spirit of holiness and of love, that they are still in the bondage of the flesh, in that spirit of fear and selfishness which cannot please God, and the end of which is to be shut out from His presence for ever.

## SERMON XII.

‘ *UNDER THE LAW*,’ OR ‘ *UNDER GRACE*’?

ROMANS vi. 14.

*Sin shall not have dominion over you : for ye are not under the law, but under grace.*

THE chief reason, I think, why St. Paul's Epistles are often thought very hard to be understood is, because the picture of what Christians ought to be is so very different from the reality of what they are. Now we do not fully understand a man, unless we can in some measure enter into his feelings; if we cannot do this, we may indeed know the common meaning of the words which he uses, but the general substance of what he says will be lost upon us, and we shall certainly carry away no very lively impression of it, to influence our conduct afterwards. This is exactly the case with St. Paul's Epistles. His feelings towards Christ, and the way in which he looked upon the Gospel, are so unlike our own, that we generally never suspect him of meaning what he really does mean; and we interpret his words according to our notions, and thus give them a sense which is, perhaps, exactly the opposite to that which he himself intends.

This remark applies particularly to what he says concerning the law and concerning grace. It has given rise to innumerable disputes and explanations, and has been



misunderstood in a very surprising manner, because our own experience does not at all help us to comprehend what the Apostle is speaking of. So in the text, when he says, 'Sin shall not have dominion over you, for you are not under the law but under grace : ' many persons will find it hard to conceive what the law has to do with the matter, or how their being under grace should more free them from the dominion of sin, than their being under the law. It helps to confuse their notions, that they think that, as the law of Moses is done away, they cannot themselves be now living under the law, and therefore they suppose that they must be living under grace : but yet they cannot find anything in their present condition which makes it hard for them to fall under the dominion of sin. They know that they are as apt to sin as ever the Jews could be, and yet fully believing that they are not under the law but under grace, they cannot see why St. Paul should say, ' Sin shall not have dominion over you : for you are not under the law, but under grace.'

It may help then to clear our notions of a great many parts of St. Paul's Epistles, and of the other Scriptures, and to make us look at ourselves with something more of suspicion and anxiety, if we first see what St. Paul means by the 'Law,' and then consider whether it is true that we, that is, the great majority of Christians, are living not under the law, but under grace.

Now by the word 'Law,' it is true that St. Paul very often means only the law of Moses, and sometimes only the ceremonies of that law : but it is not true that this is his only meaning of the word, or that it is the whole of it. By the word 'Law,' he rather means 'any rule of life which restrains our natural inclinations, and which we obey through fear, and with an effort.' Thus he says, in his first Epistle to Timothy, 'The law is not made for a righteous man, but for the lawless and dis-

obedient, for the ungodly and for sinners, for unholy and profane,' and for the wicked, in short, of every description. And again, in his Epistle to the Galatians, after counting up the different fruits of the Spirit, 'Love, joy, peace, long-suffering,' &c., he subjoins, 'against such there is no law.' Hence he calls the law a bondage, and, 'our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ,' adding, 'but now that faith is come, we are no longer under a schoolmaster.' And again, more strongly, 'If ye be led by the Spirit, ye are not under the law,' that is, If your hearts and affections are changed by the Holy Spirit, so that you love God really, and desire to please Him, you are no longer under the law, but have outgrown it, and are a law unto yourselves. You will act rightly, not because the law threatens you with punishment if you do not, but because you love to do so, and never think of the law while you are acting naturally according to the Holy Spirit. For example, the law tells us to honour our father and our mother, yet all good children love their parents without thinking at all of the commandment of the law; they love their parents naturally out of their own hearts; and their affection is a great deal more valuable than if it were shown merely to comply with the law and avoid its penalties. Now supposing that of two men one had no affection for his parents, or but very little, but that at the same time he thought it right to show them attention, and to honour them, because it was his duty; whilst the other loved them so heartily, that it was a great pleasure to him to make them comfortable; which of these, do we think, would be likely best to perform the duty of a good son? We should all, I suppose, say the latter, because everybody does better what he does from liking it, than what he does because he is obliged to it. And this then is exactly the Apostle's meaning when he says, 'Sin shall not have dominion over you: *for* ye are not under the law, but under grace.'

This also will help to explain the language which is used in the seventh chapter of the Epistle to the Romans. St. Paul there talks of the law as having brought them into condemnation, and he says, that without it people's guilt was not nearly so great as with it. 'Without the law,' indeed, in the strictest sense, no man is or ever has been. No man has been altogether without some notion of right or wrong, or without something within him, which would tell him that he was not as good as he ought to be. But some people have had much more than others, inasmuch as the revealed law of God in the Scriptures is much better than the mere natural law of conscience. Now the more a man knows of his duty, he is certainly the less excusable for not acting up to it. Here then is the case of two men, one very ignorant of good and evil, and indulging his passions, hardly knowing that there was any harm in them; the other taught by the revealed word of God, to know what he ought to do, and what not, but having no fondness for his duty, and therefore always struggling against his inclination to perform it. The latter of these, he says, is much more blamable than the former: the law, that is the command of duty—although excellent and holy and good in itself, has yet done the man rather more harm than good, because it has given him an opportunity of which he has not availed himself. Now, in the same way, good advice may do a man harm rather than good, if he refuses to follow it: because he is more to be blamed for doing wrong when advised of his danger, than if he had had no warnings at all: and yet we are clear that we ought to advise a man, and we think it an advantage that he should be advised. This is all that St. Paul means when he calls the law death: it made our sins the greater, because it had given us a knowledge of their guilt; and our consciences bore witness that it spoke justly. It made our bondage to sin appear more evidently shameful, when although we

were aware of our condition, we made no successful efforts to escape from it. Our minds served the law of God and confessed its excellence, but our flesh served the law of sin ; and it was evident that the flesh was stronger than the mind, because our actions were according to the flesh, and not according to the mind.

Immediately after this part of his epistle, St. Paul adds, almost in the words of the text, ‘ There is, therefore, no condemnation to those that believe in Christ Jesus, *for* the law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus hath made me free from the law of sin and death.’ How like is this to what he had said before, ‘ Sin shall not, or rather, will not, have dominion over you : for you are not under the law but under grace.’ He means, that so long as we only knew our duty and thought that we ought to follow it, that we did not follow it ; but that as soon as we loved it, then we followed it without an effort. Grace then makes us love our duty, and so takes the place of the law ; we want no law to make us eat and drink so long as our bodies are in health ; the natural appetite comes instead of the law, and how much surer and better does it accomplish its purpose ! So it is with our souls, when they have gained a spiritual appetite for their food ; the law is dead to them then, and their own inclination is far better than the law. And the Apostle says, that they who are in Christ Jesus have this spiritual appetite given them, that they love God, and, as being now the sons of God, whatsoever the Father doeth, that do His sons likewise : their seed remaineth in them, and they cannot sin because they are born of God.

But how was this wonderful change to be brought about ? or how can we who are evil be thus made to love good things ? The Apostle will tell us this also : ‘ God sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemning sin in the flesh : that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh but

after the Spirit.' There is much contained in these few words, no less indeed than the whole substance of the Gospel. Christ was in the likeness of sinful flesh, and as such He died : but He was the Son of God also, and therefore He rose again. He put himself in our place—He died, therefore, as we were all destined to die ; but because He rose, that was a sign that sin was conquered, and that we all should rise to life also. But He rose because of the Divine Spirit within Him ; and, in order to enable us to rise, the same Spirit, though in far inferior measure, is given also to us. So then, because Christ died, we are forgiven ; because Christ rose, we have the Spirit of God given to us also, that we may rise as He did. And how does the Spirit act upon us, but by taking of the things of Christ, and showing them to us ? It points out Christ dying for us, that we might live ; it points out God opening His arms to receive us, forgiving all our sins, and calling us no longer servants but children—heirs of His own kingdom, of His own immortality, of His own holiness. Thus showing to us the infinite mercy and love of God, it awakens an answering love in our own bosoms ; and holding out such a glorious prospect of our becoming hereafter the sons of God in glory and happiness and holiness, as we are already regarded by Him with the affection of a father, so we strive to purify ourselves even as He is pure ; and the glorious hope thus set before us, throws into the shade all earthly hopes and desires that might before have engrossed us. But more than this, the Spirit helps our infirmities, and works a secret change within us, without which the love of God and the glories of His kingdom would have been offered to our eyes in vain. Of this more hidden work of the Spirit we know nothing more than this—how we may work together with it, and how we may judge of its reality. The first is by watchfulness and prayer ; and we may judge of it by seeing

its fruit in our holy lives, and in our pure and heavenly tempers. But as to the manner of its action, that we can no more tell than how God keeps us alive. Our bodily life and our spiritual life are alike derived from the self-same Spirit; but we are also in both respects fearfully and wonderfully made, and it is a vain presumption to try to look into ourselves for any other purpose than the practical one of seeing what is wrong, that we may endeavour to correct it.

So then, if sin shall not have dominion over those who are not under the law but under grace, under which of the two are we most of us living? I am afraid it cannot be under grace, for our lives and tempers bear but little marks of it; it must be then under the law. Yes, although the temple has been destroyed for more than seventeen hundred years, though the sacrifices are no more, and the ceremonies of the law of Moses are not, perhaps, even known by name to many amongst us, still we are living under the law. We are living under a system of fear and bondage, feeling a yoke upon our necks which we dislike, yet are afraid to shake off altogether. So we evade it as much as we dare, gladly laying hold of every excuse to persuade ourselves that it does not forbid what we wish to indulge in, and paying it only so much obedience as we do not think it safe to refuse. And therefore the law worketh wrath; that is, all they who so deal with God as with a hard master, disputing with Him to the letter of the bond, and having no pleasure in doing His will, of them also God will on His part demand the uttermost farthing; He will say to them, ‘You knew or thought that I was an hard master, and to you I shall be found such; for I will deal with you in your own spirit; I will demand of you, since you think my service a task, whether you have fulfilled that task? since you feel towards me like slaves, have you rendered me a slave’s obedience?’ ‘Christ is become of

none effect to you,' says St. Paul, 'as many of you as would be acquitted by the law; ye are fallen from grace.' Christ is the Saviour of those who love God and who hate their own sins; not of those who cling to their sins, and fear and dislike God.

My brethren, when we read about the law in the New Testament, let us not think that it does not concern us now; that it relates only to circumcision and to the rites and ceremonies of the Jews, which we do not practise; and that therefore we cannot be under the law. We can be, and too many of us are, under the law; nor does the word relate to Jerusalem, and to rites and ceremonies long since forgotten, but to a spirit and temper which is daily besetting us—a disposition that serves God without loving Him; that wishes to escape His anger, but does not care to love Him and be loved by Him. And, if we look into our own hearts, as many of us as are thus minded, shall we not see how truly the Apostle has said that as many as are under the law are in bondage to sin and death? Shall we not find that we feel not as Christ felt, and therefore that we do not live as Christ lived; that it is not in human nature to be for ever doing what it dislikes; and that thus till we learn to love the service of God, we shall never do it?

Let not one word that I have spoken discourage those whose love for God is in fact proved by their very sorrow that they do not love Him enough: whose hearts are truly in the service of God, while they grieve for their own coldness; who fear Him greatly, not because they do not love Him, but because they think themselves so sinful, that the most holy God cannot love them. But the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ can love those whom Christ is not ashamed to call His brethren; and the Spirit of Christ will give them the victory over their sins, because they so greatly grieve for their own unworthiness. These persons are safe

in their Father's and in their Saviour's care ; who in His own good time will establish their weak spirit, and make them strong and happy in the faith of Christ. But these are not the greatest portion of those who call themselves Christians ; nor is there any comfort or encouragement wanted for that larger number, whose consciences will tell them that they are at once fearful and careless ; fearing God and thinking Him a hard master, when they are led to think of Him at all, but not fearing Him enough to overcome their carelessness, and so to have their fear purified from aversion and murmuring, and gradually changed by the Spirit into love.



## SERMON XIII.

*‘ THERE REMAINETH A REST TO THE PEOPLE  
OF GOD.’*

HEBREWS iv. 9.

*There remaineth a rest to the people of God.*

AMONGST the various blessings which the Scriptures promise to the true children of God, there is none, perhaps, more soothing, or which affords a stronger contrast to our present condition, than the one which is spoken of in these words: ‘There remaineth a rest to the people of God.’ Rest is one of those things of which we have in this world the greatest want, and the least enjoyment. We have often many pleasures, and a large portion of happiness; but we have not rest; we cannot lay aside all care, and repose ourselves on the bosom of our Father, with a complete consciousness that there shall be no more anxiety, or pain, or trouble, or danger. It is still true that man goeth forth to his work and to his labour until the evening; that is, that the return of day brings to every one of us a renewal of labour; if we have it not imposed upon us by the necessity of our condition, we make it for ourselves; we have schemes and pursuits in view which interest us deeply, and in the uncertainty of all human things, deep interest cannot be free from anxiety, nor anxiety from weariness of spirit. Nay, even if we enjoy for awhile some

periods of entire relaxation, yet we know that these are but the halts which we make upon a journey, that we may gain fresh strength and spirits to proceed further : we may not lay aside our shoes from our feet, nor the staff from our hands : our relaxation must be like the Passover of the Israelites, which they were to eat standing and in haste : we have not yet done our work, nor may we dare to take our rest without the fear of trespassing too much upon the hours which must again be employed in labour.

‘There remaineth, therefore, a rest to the people of God.’ Our natural craving will one day be fully satisfied, when we shall rest from all our labours for ever. Yet I must not say ‘*our* natural craving,’ unless I could venture to hope that we all were included in the Apostle’s description, as being all the living and obedient people of God. For it is to them only that he declares that there remaineth a rest. Let us look, my brethren, at this gracious promise, and let us remember to whom alone it is applied : that so many of us as are walking by faith in Christ may be cheered and comforted, and enkindled to do the work of God, by the contemplation of the glorious prize that is set before us ; and that so many of us as are practically in unbelief, may, if possible, be excited to a godly jealousy, by seeing before our eyes the blessings of the kingdom of God, from which, until we are converted, we are for ever shut out.

But what shall we say to those who see the blessings which God holds out to them, and yet do not desire them, and cannot therefore be stimulated by them as they ought to be ? To some, perhaps, the notion of perfect rest is nothing desirable ; they do not feel the need of it. These are persons for the most part tolerably easy in their outward circumstances, who are enjoying themselves freely and fully, and to whom therefore rest seems less welcome than a continued activity. They are

to be found either amongst the very young, or amongst those who have carried on to more advanced years the selfish thoughtlessness of their youth. These are they on whom it is so hard to make any impression, and of whom the Scripture speaks therefore in the language of almost hopeless condemnation. 'It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God.' Woe unto you that laugh now, for ye shall mourn and weep : woe unto you that are full, for ye shall hunger ; woe unto them who have the harp and the viol, the tabret and pipe, and wine in their feasts ; but they regard not the work of the Lord, neither consider the operation of his hands.' 'Rise up, ye women that are at ease, hearken, ye careless daughters ; many days and years shall ye be troubled, ye careless women : tremble, ye women that are at ease, be troubled, ye careless ones.' They who do not desire to enter into God's promised rest, are merely those who have never thought seriously for what purpose they were sent into the world, nor to what end the short span of their lives is rapidly hastening : men who have never taken their share in the duties that belong to them, and who have allowed themselves to look with indifference upon the poverty, and the ignorance, and the wickedness of their neighbours. It is not that such persons are blessed with a cheerful and happy temper, while those who are longing after God's rest are merely the melancholy and low-spirited. I have known men who enjoyed that merriment of heart which Solomon well calls a perpetual feast ; who were all cheerfulness and activity, and whose happy spirits could not be overcome by trouble or affliction ; yet, while enjoying this life with a fearless joy, for their joy was the gift of God, they longed after the promised rest, because they were busy in doing God's will, and in promoting His kingdom ; and they found that both were constantly obstructed by the

sins of mankind, and that their own best efforts were often weakened and relaxed by their natural corruption. Their eyes were open to the true state of things around them, and they saw it to be a state with which a good and wise man could not be satisfied. Although, therefore, they did their work with unceasing cheerfulness, and although to them in going through the vale of misery the pools were filled with water,—they found everywhere the refreshings of God's love; yet they were anxious for their time of perfect rest—not desiring to be unclothed, but clothed upon; that is, not wishing to get rid of this world, but aspiring to something better, even that mortality might be swallowed up of life.

It is to such persons, even amidst all the cheerfulness which enlivens their actual condition, that the promise of God's rest is a source of perpetual joy: and such, while most freely enjoying the many blessings which God gives them in this world, are yet conscious that there is a better thing prepared for them, without which they cannot have perfect happiness. But how few are there in the world who, as they advance in life, do not find their cares multiply upon them, so that their hearts are often full of weariness, and they can find no rest! By far the largest portion of us are obliged daily to labour for our bread; not all in the same manner, nor with the same success; but still we must labour, and eat our bread in the sweat of our brow. Now, although labour is doubtless far better than idleness (for idleness is an actual sin), yet labour continuing year after year presses upon the spirits, and more especially in times of sickness or affliction. Then it is that the burden of it becomes painfully heavy; and though it is often greatly lightened by the charity and affection of our neighbours, yet this is but relief, not rest: other cares will come in and increase its weight; those whom we love may prove undeserving, or, at least, may give us

reasonable fears and anxieties lest they should become so ; or our labour may increase in severity, without bringing with it a proportionate profit. In any, or in all of these circumstances, it is fit that we should be taught and prepared not to look for our rest in this life ; because if we do we shall look for it in vain. The expectation of it will only make us discontented with those lesser comforts which we may very likely meet with. We are not to expect that old age will bring with it the rest which we so much desire. Even amongst those who have by their industry or their good fortune secured a comfortable support for their latter days, and who therefore may be supposed to rest, because, in one sense, they are no longer obliged to labour ; yet the rest of the heart, the feeling of entire relief from weariness, is by no means to be found. If their labours are less than they were before, so are their enjoyments ; and it is very often a source of great vexation to an old man to feel that he cannot do what he used to do, that his strength and vigour are decayed, and that his time is in a manner gone by. Besides, it is a well-known fact, that many men cannot bear to give up the occupations in which they were formerly interested, and that they feel so little comfortable rest in the condition of old age, that they are glad still to busy themselves with the cares that engaged their youth and manhood. This is the old age of worldly men ; for it is true that, to Christians, the rest that remaineth for the people of God is sometimes almost enjoyed before they actually enter into it. The aged Christian, who has fought a good fight, and nearly finished his course, as he feels himself just entering upon his rest, so he cannot allow himself to be troubled by the things which he is about to leave for ever. But then his situation owes its rest, not to itself, but to its being so near the everlasting rest of heaven. If such a man did not feel himself so near the end of his journey, he

would not be so little concerned about the way in which he was travelling; and if he were told that he would never reach that comfortable end, he would find his actual state tedious rather than reposing, and would be impatient to be released from it as soon as possible.

Since then rest is not to be hoped for here, let us look a little at the nature of the rest that remaineth for the people of God. It is spoken of as a state of rest and a state of glory, with nothing to disturb us, and everything that can most delight us. We shall have risen with incorruptible bodies; that is, with bodies that cannot decay and be worn out by time, as the strongest of our bodies do now. And as they cannot decay, so neither can they ever feel sickness, or weariness, or pain; so that there will be perfect rest to our bodies, a perfect freedom from all those evils that make so large a part of human misery. And all about us shall have incorruptible bodies too, shall be equally free from pain and sickness; so that we shall have none of that unhappiness which all must have here, the sight of those whom we love in suffering. How great a blessing should we now think it, if we were told that all our friends and neighbours should enjoy perfect health and comfort of body for one year! Such a change would make the world seem to many of us a very different place from what it is now. But in heaven everyone shall be free from pain for ever.

However, bodily evils, whether suffered by ourselves or others, are far from the worst part of human misery. In heaven, all shall have arisen with incorruptible souls and spirits as well as with incorruptible bodies; there will be no more folly or sin. Now after all, the greatest miseries that we suffer here, we suffer from the sins of one another. We suffer from the selfishness, or dishonesty, or unkindness, or violence, of other men, much more, I think, than we suffer from sickness, or from poverty,

or any other affliction that comes from the hand of God only. I am sure it is so, if we take into the account, as we ought to do, what we suffer from the folly or wickedness, or even from the ill-temper, of those whom we love, or with whom we are closely connected. How large a portion of the unhappiness of a father's life arises from the bad conduct of his children; how much are brothers and sisters, husbands and wives, friends, masters and servants, annoyed and distressed by the faults of one another; such as ill temper, unkindness, over-severity, thoughtlessness, neglect of duty, or dishonesty! Even the sickness of those whom we love loses half its painfulness to us, if it be borne with patience and cheerfulness; as it becomes many times worse, if attended by fretfulness and ill humour. How happy then, how infinitely happy, will be our condition in that place where nothing evil can enter for ever; where all around us will be happy because they are good; where the society which we shall share for all eternity will be full of the purest and most perfect affections, and we shall love everyone whom we ever see with a warmer and more uninterrupted love than we can feel towards our dearest relations now!

There remains yet one thing more, which is of greater consequence than all the rest. If all those with whom we lived were to be ever so free from faults, we should not yet be perfectly happy if we were not free from sin ourselves. So long as bad passions exist within us, so long as we feel envy, or malice, or pride, or selfishness, the goodness of others would not be sufficient to give us perfect rest. But in heaven the victory over our sins will be complete, and they will never disturb us more; not that we shall suddenly become, after our resurrection, different characters from what we are now (for if this were so, wicked men might expect to go to heaven, and there to become changed to good), but that the sins which through God's grace we have overcome

here with difficulty, and against which we must ever be on our guard, lest they should again spring up within us, shall there lose their power of hurting us, because the temptations with which this world abounds will in heaven have no existence.

So then, my brethren there remaineth a rest for the people of God. But what remaineth for those who are not God's people? What shall be the portion of the profane and the sinner? For them there is no rest appointed; 'there is no peace, saith my God for the wicked;' but tribulation and anguish, indignation and wrath, upon every soul of man that doeth evil. In this world our troubles are hardly ever without some mixture of comfort, just as our happiness has always some mixture of anxiety; the unkindness or misconduct of one person is made up, in some measure, by the kindness and goodness of another; and the sense of our own sins can be, and often is, driven away for the time by business or pleasure. But in hell there will be no kindness nor goodness, no employment nor amusement to prevent the wicked from feeling their misery to the uttermost. And what a misery it must be to live for ever with none but the wicked, deprived as they then will be of all means of exercising their wickedness with success! In this life, those who keep bad company are led by their fondness for certain pleasures which are followed up by bad men: it is the love of idleness, or of drinking, or of gambling, which first brings them acquainted with the idle, the dishonest, the drunkard, or the gambler. But how wretched would be the society of such persons if they were confined together without the possibility of indulging their bad habits, and without the hope of ever being able to indulge them again! How would their evil passions prey upon themselves and on one another; how full would they be of malice, and of disappointment and despair! How different is such a state from that of the



rest ordained for the people of God ; and what a prospect does it offer to those who have felt the weariness of sin even in this world, and must now look forward to an existence of tenfold weariness through all eternity ! To the wicked, indeed, death is no place of rest : to the wicked poor man it brings infinitely more trouble, and labour, and suffering, than he ever felt from his poverty here ; to the wicked rich man it is a change from good things to torments—from the enjoyment of many comforts, to the undying worm and the unquenched and unquenchable fire. If we would but think when anything tires, or vexes, or pains us, what great folly it is to cause ourselves to be tired, and vexed, and pained for ever, we should be more careful of our lives, and endeavour to make a better provision for our future welfare. If we find a little worldly pain or sorrow so hard to bear, how shall we bear everlasting burnings ? Yet such will be the end, if it does not lead us to repentance. For as God is not tired of blessing His servants, but gives them first grace, and then peace, and hope, and love, and joy, and glory ; so will not He hold His hand from the punishment of His enemies ; but will send them trouble, and weariness, and fear, and despair, and shame, in this world and in the world to come, throughout the ages of eternity.

## SERMON XIV

*CHRIST THE SAVIOUR.*

JOHN xii. 47.

*I came not to judge the world, but to save the world.*

v. 22.

*The Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment unto the Son.*

THESE two passages are an instance of the seeming contradictions which occur sometimes in the Scriptures, and which are laid hold of by ignorant or dishonest readers to prove the most opposite conclusions. It might, I think, be useful to bring all these passages together, and place them close by the side of each other, as I have done with the two which I have just repeated. If that were done, every man of common sense would see that they must be taken with reference to each other ; that while each delivers a truth, each also was meant to hinder us from dwelling only upon what the other teaches us ; that they point out to us two ways of looking at the same object, and each equally useful ; while they are each conveyed in terms seemingly contradictory to one another, for the very purpose of catching our attention, and making us take both truths together in the full meaning of each, instead of attempting to reconcile them by taking away from the peculiar force of both of them.

The two places which I have chosen for my text will

show more clearly what I mean. Both convey a truth of very great importance, and which requires to be fully received ; and both taken together, give us the exact view of Christ's dealings with mankind. 'He came not to judge the world, but to save the world : ' here is our example of conduct. 'The Father hath committed all judgment unto Him : ' here is our warning, and at the same time our hope. And as both are true of the Lord Himself, so are they true also, in an inferior measure, of us also. We are set not to judge the world, but to save the world ; not to strive to put down evil by force, but to labour with all meekness and long-suffering to overcome evil with good. Yet, ' Know ye not that we shall judge angels ? ' <sup>1</sup> that when the throne of the Son of Man is set for judgment, He will be surrounded with ten thousands of His saints ; and that all the good will join with full assent in that great sentence by which the power of evil shall be put down for ever ?

' He came not to judge the world, but to save the world.' Here is our example : for as He was, so are we in this world. And His commands are very full and strong, that we should imitate Him in this point. ' Judge not, that ye be not judged.' ' If thou speak evil of another, and judgest another, thou speakest evil of the law, and judgest the law.' ' Who art thou that judgest another man's servant ? ' Nothing can be more natural than the question of the servants in the parable to their master, as soon as they saw that the tares had grown up amongst the wheat : ' Lord, wilt thou then that we go and gather them up ? ' And nothing can be more useful for us to dwell upon than the master's answer : ' Let both grow together until the harvest.'

So in two cases in our Lord's life the same principle may be observed—in His answer to James and John about the Samaritan village, and in His behaviour to the woman taken in adultery. When He was asked to call down fire from

<sup>1</sup> 1 Cor. vi. 3.

heaven to consume the people who had refused to receive Him, he replied, 'Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of; for the Son of Man is not come to destroy men's lives, but to save them.' You see they are almost the very words of the text, 'He came not to judge the world, but to save the world.' Yet we know that He shall be revealed from heaven in flaming fire, to take vengeance on them who obey not His Gospel; a fire not to consume them, but to burn them like that bush in the wilderness which Moses saw burning with fire, yet unconsumed. But each in his own order: first He came as the Saviour, and afterwards He shall come as the judge. So, again, with His behaviour to the woman taken in adultery. He was neither a temporal judge, to order the law to be enforced upon her; nor was He then acting as the Judge of all the earth, to punish the adulterer, together with all other sinners, with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of His power. He acted then as a private individual, and as He meant His disciples to act in their private capacities, when they were not placed in the office of magistrates, whose business it is to judge and to punish. 'Let him,' He said, 'that is without sin among you, cast the first stone at her.' Our private severity against sinners should be ever checked by the remembrance of our own sin. Of course, this does not apply to men who are called by the law to try and to judge offenders; for they are acting then in the place of Him to whom judgment belongs, and have His authority to condemn and punish; but it does apply not only to all cases of personal wrong done to ourselves, but whenever we hear of evil conduct, and have to speak or to act concerning the offender. It is then that the greatest tenderness is called for; a spirit of kindness and forbearance almost without limit. We are so much more likely to be too violent than too merciful, to disguise our own angry passions under the name of a regard to public justice and

public example, that whether in our own conduct, or in advising others, I know not that we can too strongly enforce the words of our Lord, that He came not to judge the world, but to save the world.

But are we then to suffer evil to go on unresisted, and, leaving it to the judgment of Christ, take no pains to oppose it ourselves? Nay, we are to resist it all our lives long—to resist it even unto blood, if need be; but then it is our own blood that is spoken of, not that of those with whom we are contending; we may and must strive against sin in ourselves, and in others, with all arms but those of violence. It has been a common remark, that those who are too careless to prevent crimes, are often the most severe in punishing them: selfish indifference in the first place, and selfish resentment afterwards, being both equally common in our bad nature. So in our warfare against evil: that one weapon which Christ forbids, is the one which men most readily seize; while all those others lie neglected which He not only allows, but commands us to use. Persuasion, reasoning, unwearied activity, and a manifest neglect of our own interests, nay, even of our own lives, in promoting the cause of good, all these are things that will do far more than violence; and on the use of all these we may justly expect a blessing from our Master. By these means two of the greatest evils which the world has ever seen were overcome—the combats of the gladiators under the Roman empire, and the slave trade in our own times. I need not say by what patience and activity, and devotion of time, money, and faculties to the work, the friends of the abolition gradually succeeded in opening the eyes of their countrymen to the dreadful wickedness of a system which had so long been practised without scruple. But it should ever be remembered, for the encouragement of those who labour to put down evil by the Christian arms of truth and meekness, that the same act of carrying away slaves

from Africa to our colonies, which in the memory of men still living was practised and talked of with as much indifference as any other branch of trade, is at this moment considered by the law of England a capital felony ; and any man who engages in it is liable, if detected, to be punished with an infamous death.

The story of the gladiators is perhaps less commonly known ; but though it happened long ago, it is well worth mentioning, as an instance of a Christian resisting unto blood, striving against sin. In the times of the Romans, one of the favourite amusements of the people was to witness the battles of gladiators, that is, men who had been either taken prisoners in war, or who had been stolen from their country by slave dealers, and who were obliged to fight with one another at Rome as a public entertainment. Several hundreds of persons were thus slaughtered every year in mere wantonness, and this practice had gone on for many centuries without any opposition. When the Romans became Christians, or rather began to be called so, the people still frequented these shows with great delight, although some good men had begun to endeavour to procure their suppression. At last, a Christian, named Telemachus, determined to try whether he could not accomplish this object by the sacrifice of his own life. He went from Asia to Rome, he was present at one of those combats, and he went down upon the stage to try to part two of the men who were then engaged. The spectators were made furious by this interruption of their sport, and killed Telemachus on the spot, by overwhelming him with stones. But the horror of this additional crime strengthened the efforts of those who were labouring to put a stop to these combats ; and a law was passed and enforced, by which they were abolished for ever.

There is one thing more which I may mention, in which we should do well oftener to remember the example of

Christ, who came not to judge the world, but to save the world. In bestowing kindnesses upon our neighbours, and particularly in what we may endeavour to do for the relief of the poor, it very often happens that we meet with an ungrateful return, or if not so personally, yet those whom we have assisted make an unworthy use of our bounty, or their characters may be such that we feel apt to be disgusted with them and think that they do not deserve that we should do anything for them. Now I certainly do not mean to say that bad people should receive as much assistance and encouragement as good ones : or that, in cases of very scandalous wickedness, we are not bound to mark the offenders, so as to show them and others how greatly Christians abhor sin. But so long as we associate without scruple with a great many persons whose lives are far from what they ought to be, we ought not to withhold our kindness from the poor, because they also are not what they ought to be. A great deal of imprudence, a great deal of murmuring, much wastefulness and neglect of the aid we offer, and much that is generally faulty in their whole lives ; these we shall often find, and we must earnestly labour not to be offended at them. It will be often a hard effort ; for faults of a different sort from our own, and in a rank of society with which we are not quite familiar, are apt to strike us strongly : and the anger and disgust which they occasion, seem to us to be nothing but a proper dislike of evil, and a sense of justice. But it may, perhaps, somewhat soften us towards them, if we remember that they are not altogether so different from our own as we might at first sight fancy. Do *we* show no imprudence in the great concern of our lives, not exerting our common sense to avoid temptations, or to gain the means of overcoming them ? Do we never murmur, if not at our general condition, yet at some of God's particular dispensations towards us ; at the disappointment of some favourite scheme, at

the want of success in life, at the neglect or insufficient attention which we fancy that we meet with? Wastefulness and neglect of the aid given us!—these surely are faults which if we censure in others, it is indeed trying to pull the mote out of our brother's eye, regarding not the beam that is in our own. Time, money, strength, abilities, influence, faculties, and gifts of every kind, how constantly and how greatly do we waste them! how constantly, too, do we neglect the aid which is given us, and instead of improving and cherishing the serious thoughts and good resolutions which the Holy Spirit puts into our hearts, we let them be driven away by other cares and other pleasures, till they at last will return to us no more! And for general badness of conduct, if God were to bless us only according to our worthiness, what would be the portion of the best of us! If He were to withdraw His gifts as soon as we cease to deserve them, how soon should we fade away in His displeasure! Herein 'God commendeth his love to us, that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.' 'While we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the blood of his Son.'

But yet it may be said, that God has Himself told us, that there is a time beyond which He will strive with our sinful flesh no more; that there is a day of salvation, which if we allow to pass away, the night cometh when no man can work; and that even Christ Himself has told us that we are not to cast our pearls before swine. So, indeed, God does deal with us, for He can see into our hearts, and knows and judges rightly when it is fit that we should be given up to our own wickedness. But we are to imitate, not God as He is in Himself, when He takes to Him His great power, and reigns as the King of all the earth,—for in this character no man hath seen God at any time, nor can we know Him till we see Him face to face in heaven; but we are to imitate God revealed to us in Jesus Christ, the only-begotten Son; in whose life is declared that image of the



invisible and incomprehensible God, which alone we can understand or should strive to copy now. Jesus came not to judge the world but to save the world; His tenderness and mercy never were exhausted, and His labours for the good of mankind ceased not to the latest hour of His life. At the very moment when He was betrayed, He touched the ear of Malchus and healed him; at the very hour when He was hanging on the cross and His enemies were mocking His sufferings, He was praying to God in their behalf. And if He Himself has told us, that we are not to cast pearls before swine, He is there speaking of the pearl of great price, of the knowledge of His Gospel, which being so far above the low morals and unworthy affections of many men, cannot be offered to them profitably till they cease to be swine, that is, till they are become somewhat more able to understand and love it. But He does not say that we are not to give them such things as can do them good; their bodily wants may be relieved, though their souls are yet hardened; and through the kindness thus shown to them they may sometimes be rendered less brutish, and fitted to receive the greatest kindness of all. So then, we must strive in all things to follow His steps, who came not to judge the world but to save the world; and who did not disdain to feed with the loaves and the fishes that very multitude who could not receive the pearl of His doctrine except it were conveyed to them in parables, as they were able to bear it.

But the text yet further says, that the Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment unto the Son; and this part of it I said was our warning and our hope, as the former part was our example. From Christ the Saviour, then, we must pass to the consideration of Christ the Judge, and this will form, if He is pleased to permit it, the subject of a continuation of this discourse.

## SERMON XV

*CHRIST THE JUDGE.*

2 CORINTHIANS v. 16.

*Though we have known Christ after the flesh, yet now henceforth know we him no more.*

THAT is to say, Henceforth know we Him no more after the flesh. We are no longer to think of Him as in the days when He was compassed with infirmity, despised and rejected of men, full of sorrows and patient sufferings. The Son of Man is declared to be the Son of God; His season of humiliation is passed away; He is seated at the right hand of God, and we shall see Him no more till He comes in the clouds of heaven, and the throne of judgment is set, and the dead are called up from their graves to appear before Him. ‘The Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment to the Son; that all men may honour the Son, even as they honour the Father.’

There is nothing in the whole world that so much concerns every one of us here assembled, as that great day of which I am going to speak. It is our hope and our warning, and should be borne in mind by us every day of our lives, that we may be each the fitter to meet it. Whether it is far or near we know not; but this we do know, that it is unavoidable; and that to each one of us it is for all practical purposes near enough; as death is to

each of us the same as judgment. Now certainly the things which I am going to say must be known already by all, nor can any words add to the inexpressible solemnity of the description which Christ Himself hath given us of the judgment. I would but recall your minds and my own, to what we know indeed, but too often forget, and consider some of the particular points connected with the great day, that we may gain a clear and a lively notion of it, and observe what it is that we are daily venturing to despise.

Whatever may be our state between our death and the end of the world, it will clearly be a very imperfect one; our sense of happiness and misery will be like the feeling of a pleasant or a frightful dream, which makes our recollection of the night either comfortable or painful, but which is as nothing when compared with the solid good and evil of our waking hours. The Scripture tells us very little of this period, but leads us to think chiefly of the resurrection, when we shall again be clothed with bodies, and shall begin to enter on our everlasting portion. We shall rise then, and shall be assembled before the judgment-seat, all of us who have ever lived in the world from Adam to that very hour. And we shall rise doubtless with hearts that shall tell us at once, with perfect certainty, what sentence we shall receive from the Judge. It is remarkable, that in the Revelation of St. John, the fearful are put first amongst a long list of sinners, who have their part in the second death. Now by the fearful, he certainly does not mean those who fear God in this world, but those who will fear Him in the next. Then it will be impossible to keep Him out of our thoughts, as so many do here. He will be present to us, so that we cannot turn away to the right nor to the left; and therefore every one will either love Him or fear Him. Those who love Him will do so from the consciousness of all that He has done for them, and of their own desire in their lifetime to please Him. Those

who fear Him will do so, because they have never loved Him, nor tried to do His will in sincerity ; and therefore they regard Him as a hard master, reaping where He has not sown, and gathering where He has not strawed ; and finding nothing in themselves wherewith to answer His demands, they naturally are afraid of His coming. So that, anxious to escape from His eye, they will fly from Him with those who are full of all kinds of sin, and are therefore desirous to shrink from His presence.

But their fear will then be too late ; they and all the rest of the children of Adam must come before the judgment-seat, there to be judged for the whole course of their lives. We shall be questioned there for our thoughts, our words, and our deeds. Our Judge is one who searcheth the reins and the heart ; and as He has told us that evil thoughts are sins, so they will not be forgotten in our trial. So that we have great need to say with David, ‘ Who can tell how oft he offendeth ? Lord, cleanse thou me from my secret faults ! ’ Our sins of this kind we forget almost as soon as they are committed : but they are kept in remembrance in the sight of God. Nor can we say that we have not been warned to keep watch over our thoughts. We have been told that he who hateth his brother is a murderer ; that he who looketh on a woman to lust after her, hath committed adultery with her already in his heart : and the Law itself has not thought it enough to say, Thou shalt not steal, without adding another commandment to say, Thou shalt not covet. And it is plain, that not only in these three things, but in every other sin, where the act is evil, the thought or inclination must be evil too.

But there is more to be said than this. Much of the lives of every one of us must be passed alone ; and when we are so alone, our minds are constantly at work, or rather, I should say, they are doing themselves good or

doing themselves harm ; they are either gaining purity and strength, or they are corrupting themselves by imaginations absolutely evil, or they are weakening themselves by not thinking at all ; and thus are carried down the stream whilst they are only neglecting to make head against it. What I have said wants some little allowance, but not enough to lessen its truth generally : there are times in our lives when it is absolutely good for us to think of nothing at all, to give our minds if possible an entire rest, that they may be the stronger for their work to come. But still we have all of us so much time in which we ought to think, and in which we naturally do so, that it is of great consequence to us how and what we think. It is of great consequence to us to avoid certain thoughts, which, perhaps, are of all evil thoughts the most common : thoughts of lust, and thoughts of pride. It is in men's lonely and silent hours that those thoughts are often entertained, which keep alive the fire of lustful desires within them, and in a wonderful manner, but yet most certainly, loosen and lower the general tone of our principles, and remove us farther and farther from the love of the most pure God. And it is also in this same season of solitude, that we feed ourselves with high and vain imaginations, increasing our self-love, and so lessening our reverence to God our Father, and our gratitude to His Son Jesus Christ our Saviour. We do not willingly call back humbling recollections, but we dwell with pleasure on anything that exalts us in our own eyes ; on anything that we have done well, on any honours that have been paid us, on the esteem and love which our friends feel towards us, on the exercise of our talents and faculties. It is surprising how blind we thus become to our real state as sinners, and how we lose the proper Christian abhorrence and dread of sin.

What I have said will apply of course to some more than others, nor would it be possible to go through every particular train of thoughts by which different persons of

different ages and conditions in life impair the health of their souls, and bring on or aggravate one kind or another of spiritual disease. But though the evil may be various, yet the remedy is the same for all. To think often on God, on our business in the world, and our destiny when we quit it, should surely bring us to a soberer and better temper; and when we are not thinking of these, it will be a great remedy to the mischiefs which I have spoken of, to think on the good qualities of others, on the kindnesses which they have done to us, on every thing that is amiable or beautiful in their lives and characters; in short, I may say, generally, to think on any thing rather than ourselves: to indulge in thoughts that will strengthen our love for others, our compassion, our activity in doing good, our cheerfulness and contentedness, rather than on those which do but foster our pride and self-satisfaction.

We shall be questioned next for our words: and here the declaration of Christ is full and positive, that, ‘Every idle word which men shall speak, they shall give account thereof at the day of judgment.’ Some persons have thought this so strict a law, that they have tried to give it a less extensive meaning; they say that by ‘idle words,’ our Lord meant such only as were spoken against our neighbour hastily, but which might yet be the means of doing him a serious injury. But ‘idle words’ must be something else, I think, besides these; and seem to me to mean exactly what we should at first sight suppose; that is, thoughtless or careless words, which we utter in the lightness of our heart, without considering what we are saying. But then will God condemn us for every careless word? not at all, my brethren,—nor does Christ say that He will; but only that we shall give an account of them. A man surely may be called on to give an account of his conduct, without being of necessity condemned when he has given it. But what Christ says is this,—that all our words, as

well as all our thoughts, and all our actions, will be examined at the last day : and that it will be no excuse for such as have in them anything of evil, that they were spoken hastily and carelessly. Angry words, unclean words, profane words, words of unkindness, bitterness, sneering, vanity, pride, or selfishness, will all be charged to our account : and if we say that they were spoken hastily, the answer is ready, that we were warned to take heed to them ; and that our negligence in not keeping a watch over our tongue was our own fault. But for the innocent words of our lighter hours, for all that harmless playfulness which cheers and enlivens the path of life, and by refreshing our spirits makes us more able to work on in the duties of our calling,—we shall give an account of them certainly, but it will be followed by no blame ; for the free mirth of a Christian is enjoyed with faith, that is, it is sanctified to him by his holy principles, inasmuch as he strives to have a conscience void of offence towards God and towards men ; and being at peace with God through Jesus Christ, he tastes with a grateful heart that relaxation which the cares of the world and his own weakness render necessary to him.

Lastly, we shall be judged for our actions ; ‘They that have done good shall come forth unto the resurrection of life, and they that have done evil unto the resurrection of condemnation.’ And here it is well worth our notice, that our Lord, in His description of the day of judgment, passes over all mention of our evil thoughts and of our evil words ; nay, He does not so much as name what we have done of evil ; but all those whom He describes as turned into hell, are condemned for not having done good. And certainly the point of view in which Christ has thus Himself taught us to regard the last day, must be the one in which it most concerns us to think of it. Other Scriptures have told us of the punishment of great and striking sins ; the murderer,

the thief, the adulterer, and fornicator, the drunkard, the reveller, the covetous, and the liar, these we know have no inheritance in the kingdom of God, but have their part in the lake of fire. But Christ did not think that these things were our greatest danger : His disciples needed not to be told to flee from these. He warned them what is far less apt to alarm the conscience, and of what the world had little fear—of the danger of leaving good undone : ‘ Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire ; for I was an hungred, and ye gave me no meat,’ &c. How like is this to His parable of the rich man and Lazarus : when, after merely saying, that there was a rich man clothed with purple and fine linen, and who fared sumptuously every day ; and that there was a certain beggar named Lazarus, who was laid at his gate full of sores, and desiring to be fed with the crumbs which fell from the rich man’s table,—He adds at once, without saying any thing more of the rich man’s wickedness, that he died and was buried, and in hell he lift up his eyes, being in torments. There was one hungry, and thirsty, and sick, and naked, and he did not sufficiently feed him, nor visit him, nor clothe him ; and therefore he was bidden to depart into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels. It is indeed, an awful thought for us all ; and that it should be so awful, shows how little progress we have as yet made in Christian love : for to him who loves his brother it is not a painful duty, but a pleasure and a happiness to do him good ; and none need ever fear lest he should be punished for not doing well, when it makes him happy to do it. But consider how wisely Christ has marked out our great temptation. They who are full and abound have no call to do harm to others ; but they are greatly tempted to leave them alone, and not trouble themselves at all about them. To enjoy ourselves without wronging our neighbour, we try to fancy must be innocent : we do not like to be for ever ready for the call to action ;



to stand with our loins girded about, and our lights burning; not thinking of sitting down to the feast, or lying down to slumber, till we come to the marriage supper of the Lamb, to the rest reserved for the people of God.

The truth is, we do not firmly believe in the reality of that promised rest and happiness in heaven, but are willing to make sure of some portion of it, if we can, here on earth. 'This is the victory which overcometh the world, even our faith;' and this faith is too often no more than a grain of mustard seed, and thus we do not overcome the world. But let us read that most awful picture of the last day, which Christ has given us, and then pray unto God our Father with all earnestness, that He will give us grace to believe it without doubting; to believe it heartily and steadily; to look forward as calmly and confidently to our everlasting rest when our labour of life is over, as we do to the comfort of our evening fire to refresh us after the labour of the day. We can go out readily enough to our work and to our labour until the evening; we are not anxious to hurry home before the time; for we are sure that the sun will set, and we shall leave our work; and quiet, and loving friends, and sleep, will repay us for past weariness. O that we were thus patient in the labour of our lives; that we were never weary of well-doing; that we never thought of our own ease and enjoyments, so long as there remained sickness, or poverty, or sorrow, in others, that we might relieve! O that we could truly say, that to us to live was Christ; and that if we continued in life, we should see a more plenteous fruit of our labours, the only thing worth living for! But wishes are most idle for ourselves and others; let us rather pray with all sincerity, that God, who gives all grace, will increase our faith and our love; and that the great day of our last account may be for ever as present to our minds as the things which we see and hear around us are present to our eyes and ears.

## SERMON XVI.

*THE KINGDOM OF GOD.*

MATT. vi. 10.

*Thy kingdom come.*

No words can be more familiar to every ear than these : they are a part of the Lord's Prayer, which is used by almost every one who ever prays at all : and as such most of us, perhaps, repeat them with our lips every day. But perhaps, also, our very familiarity with them makes us think less about them ; we repeat them from habit, without considering what it is that we are saying. It is, indeed, a prayer in which none but a sincere Christian can join at all, and in which we shall join more heartily exactly in proportion to our advancement in goodness. But those who are Christ's soldiers, who have really begun to fight under His banner, and know by experience how hard and how dangerous is their warfare, *they* have learnt to wish from their hearts for the overthrow of all their Master's enemies, and the establishment of His kingdom in peace, that they too may enter into their rest, and may serve Him without disturbance.

The complete and proper notion of the kingdom of God is a state in which God is owned as King, and obeyed by His people. Heaven, therefore, is the kingdom of God in the fullest sense ; for there God reigns over willing

subjects, and His will is theirs also. In the heart of every good Christian, again, the kingdom of God exists, truly, though imperfectly: for a good Christian not only calls, but really feels, Christ to be his Master;—the purpose of his heart is to offer Him an entire and willing obedience;—and whatever of rebellion there may be in his thoughts, words, and actions, is earnestly repented of, and gradually more and more subdued. In a third sense, but a far lower one, and greatly corrupted from the gracious design of its heavenly Founder, the whole company of professing Christians is called in Scripture the kingdom of Heaven, or of God. It is called so, because every Christian nominally acknowledges God to be his King, and has promised to render Him true obedience. It is called so further, because God promised to be present with the Church of Christ, in an especial manner, to the end of the world; that they should be His people and He would be their God, inasmuch as He would dwell in them by His Spirit, enlightening their minds, and purifying their hearts into a resemblance to Himself.

But this kingdom of God on earth, which was proclaimed after the descent of the Holy Ghost on the day of Pentecost, and which should have been as truly deserving of the name as the kingdom of God in heaven, has from its first beginning to this very hour belied its title by its practice. Christians have refused their God and King obedience in deed, even while bowing the knee before Him, and saying, ‘Hail, Master!’ And therefore, although in this imperfect and nominal sense the kingdom of God has been established for nearly eighteen hundred years, yet we still do, and still justly may, make it a part of our daily prayer, that the ‘kingdom of God may come;’—may come, that is not in word only, but in power;—may contain, not a mingled mass of false and true subjects, as it does now, but those only whose hearts are truly devoted

to their Sovereign, and who are resolved in sincerity to follow Him whithersoever He may call them.

When the kingdom of God first began to be preached, the kingdom of Satan offered it a direct opposition. Men were persecuted for professing the very name of Christ ; and many of them were called upon, after the example of their Master, to resist unto blood, striving against sin. But in this warfare Christ's kingdom gained ground daily : His servants were naturally driven, by the dangers to which they were exposed from without, to draw closer to Him and to each other ; they were strengthened with might by His Spirit, and the effect of their Master's principles was such as to make even their enemies confess that God was in them of a truth. But soon Satan learnt to oppose their progress more artfully. Resistance appeared to fail before them ; from being persecuted, they became triumphant ; kings professed the name of Christ, and the idols of the heathen perished from before His face. His servants were ready to join in the hymn of the Apostle, 'The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of the Lord and of his Christ.' But the snare of their enemy meanwhile fully succeeded : the kingdoms of the world became in name the kingdoms of Christ, only to make the kingdom of Christ in reality a kingdom of the world. Christ's servants were flattered and honoured till they began to relax their watchfulness, and to go less earnestly to their Lord for the support and guidance of His Spirit. So their lives grew more and more like those of the servants of Satan : the salt of the earth lost its saltiness, and thus became the most worthless thing in the world ; and of this mixture between Christians and men of low worldly principles, it might be said, in the words of the book of Genesis, 'the voice was Jacob's voice, but the hands were the hands of Esau ;' the words and outward professions were those of

the Church of God, but the deeds and principles of life were those of the unbelievers.

No serious or thoughtful mind can avoid being deeply struck with this most grievous apostasy. We read the prophecies of Isaiah and the other prophets, we read even those of Zacharias and of the host of angels which were uttered at the very time of our Lord's birth, without ever thinking that those prophecies contain, as it were, the picture of a second earthly paradise, which our sins have forfeited as completely as we lost the first. We talk of their being fulfilled in a spiritual sense; we talk of the richness of the language of the eastern nations, which expressed every thing in the brightest colouring; but in this we wrong the force of God's prophecies, and deceive ourselves: they have a spiritual sense, but they have also a literal one; and it is only because the wickedness of mankind has frustrated the literal one, that we are driven now to console ourselves only with the spiritual one.

For example, when the angels sang at the birth of Christ, 'Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace!' they did but repeat the words of an older prophecy of Isaiah, which declared, according to Bishop Lowth's excellent translation, that 'the weapons of the warrior should be for a burning, even as fuel for the fire,' when that child should be born who was to be called the Prince of Peace. We are forced now to interpret these words of that inward peace of mind which Christ indeed does give to all His faithful servants; we are forced so to interpret them, because otherwise the fact and the prophecy are so fearfully at variance with one another. And this some persons are afraid to acknowledge, as if it were dangerous to the truth of the Scriptures to confess it. But the fear is vain, and the concern should be bestowed elsewhere. God pledged himself to do His part, and the Prophet spoke as if it were impossible that man should not do his. The Prince of

Peace did come ; the kingdom of heaven was set open before all men ; the Holy Spirit was given to lead them safely to it. Could there, by any possibility, have been ever another war in the world, if we had accepted the mercies given us ? But when we turned our backs upon the kingdom of God, and grieved and rejected His Holy Spirit, and lusted all our lives after the good things of this world, and were guided by all evil spirits of covetousness, and selfishness, and pride, how could a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit ? how from such a fountain of bitterness could flow forth the fresh waters of life ? or how could peace exist amidst such a throng of bad passions, which made us at once at enmity with God and with one another ?

The prophecies of Isaiah and of the other prophets describe the happiness of the kingdom of God ; and the Sermon on the Mount contains the laws, or rather, I should say, the principles of conduct by which the lives of the subjects of that kingdom were to be governed. Now, if we can read through the Sermon on the Mount, and say, that the principles there described are generally acknowledged and acted upon ; that we generally are pure in heart, merciful, poor or humble in spirit, meek, and peacemakers ; that we shun not only the crimes of murder and adultery, but every violent or lustful passion, even in their lowest degrees ; that we have not the least occasion for oaths, for that our word is as true as our oath ; that our pride never resents affronts or retaliates wrongs, but that we are meek and patient, not rendering evil for evil to any man ; that our kindness and zeal are not limited to ourselves, our families, or our friends, but extend to all men as far as lies in our power :—if we can say all this with truth, then, indeed, we may complain that God has not fulfilled His promise ; that we are waiting for Him, but that He has forgotten to be gracious.

But if the contrary to all this be the case ; if the Sermon

on the Mount cannot be read by any good man without the strongest feelings of shame and humiliation for the contrast between the picture of Christian principles there drawn and the reality which he sees around him ; then it is not God who has been slack to fulfil His word, but we who have rendered ourselves incapable of receiving the blessing ; the rain has fallen in its season, the sun has shone, and the husbandman has laboured, but the ungrateful and unprofitable soil has refused to yield the increase.

But now it may be asked, How can we each of us,—we, the several persons now met together in this church,—how can we do anything to mend such a state of the world as I have been describing ? and if we cannot *do* anything towards it, of what use is it to hear or to speak about it ? We cannot, indeed, mend the world, nay, I am afraid that it is hardly safe for us to turn our thoughts towards any such grand and extensive schemes of improvement, lest we lose sight of our own more urgent business, to mend those with whom we are daily living, and most of all to mend ourselves. We cannot certainly bring about the kingdom of God in the literal sense of it, any more than the holiest of the old patriarchs or prophets could recover the Paradise which Adam had forfeited for ever. But there was an Eden promised which should overpay the loss of that earthly garden ; and there is a kingdom of God which we may each gain for ourselves here on earth, although we cannot make wars to cease, nor drive away falsehood, and gross selfishness, and pride and violence, from the hearts and actions of the mass of mankind. I speak of that kingdom, which Christ declared was not to come with observation ; neither should men say, Lo here ! or, lo there ! for behold the kingdom of God is within you ! Certainly He did not speak thus of His literal and visible kingdom, when He should reign over all the world, and all men should do Him service ; for of that kingdom every tongue would say, Lo here is

the Lord's people, the city set upon the hill of Zion which could not be hid ; ' This is no other than the House of God, and this is the Gate of Heaven ; ' it could not come without the observation of every eye, for it would change the whole face of the earth, and be as visible as the sun shining in its strength. But Christ spoke of the kingdom of heaven established in the hearts of a few only, His own chosen servants ; whose lives would attract no notice, nor their conduct produce any marked change in the state of the world ; but within themselves there would be all the blessings of God's kingdom ; a will resigned to His, evil passions and desires driven away, and peace, and love, and joy, continually abiding. It is the land of Beulah on this side the river ; which enjoys the light of the celestial city, and which the shining ones do not disdain to visit on errands of grace and love.

To this, by the grace of God, we may bring ourselves ; and not ourselves only, but those too who are nearest and dearest to us. ' Behold me and the children whom God has given me.' We come not alone to the kingdom of our Father, but our companions also may come with us with joy and gladness, and enter together into the palace of the heavenly King. And does this not concern us all ? Is there any one amongst us who has no relation, no friend, whom he would desire to bring with himself to God ? or, if indeed there be such an one, who should have neither son, nor brother, nor friend, still he has his own soul to deliver, to live himself in the light of the kingdom of God, though all the world besides should choose to sit in darkness.

We are interested therefore in the principles shown forth in the Sermon on the Mount : we are concerned to learn and to practise the tempers, the desires, and the conduct that belong to Christ's kingdom. To learn them and to practise them from our earliest youth ; for they



are not learnt in a day, and every year that we delay to learn them, gives strength to our natural passions and desires, and fortifies in our hearts the kingdom of Satan. For that kingdom exists wherever the kingdom of God does not: it exists and flourishes amidst thoughtlessness, and selfish love of pleasure, and neglect of the means of grace, as surely as amidst the practice of the most heinous crimes. The devils can never be kept out of the empty heart, they will enter and reign where the way is not closed against them by the indwelling Spirit of our God. This indeed is one of the most divine excellences of the Gospel, that it asks not so much, 'What sins are you free from?' but, 'What advancement have you made in holiness? what works of the Spirit shine forth in your daily living?' It speaks of the love of God and of Christ as the signs of a state of salvation, because it knows that we love those naturally whom we are labouring to please, and that on the contrary we cannot love those whom we feel that we have offended, and whose anger we know that we deserve.

They therefore that are in the flesh cannot please God; and therefore cannot love Him. O that we would well consider how much is meant by these little words, 'they that are in the flesh.' It means, those who are such as they were first born; those who have not changed their nature; those who have left their characters alone, to be formed at random, partly by the example of those with whom they live, partly by any prevailing passion by which they are most influenced. 'Such persons,' says St. Paul, 'cannot please God.' They can neither please Him in youth nor in age: at whatever time they die, they must go down to the grave unredeemed; for Christ prays not for such as they are, because they have rejected and despised His precious sacrifice. They then who cannot please God, can know nothing of the peace and joy of His kingdom. Yet those blessings are to be gained, nor is our daily prayer necessarily fruitless, 'Thy kingdom

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come ;'—if not to all the world, yet at least to me and my neighbours ; ' that we may be Thine, though all besides should deny Thee.' ' Thy kingdom come ;' and it will come if we strive to fulfil the prayer that directly follows, making ourselves so fully the subjects of God, that His will may be done by us on earth, even as it is done by the saints and angels, the subjects of His kingdom, in heaven.

## SERMON XVII.

*‘DOST THOU BELIEVE ON THE SON OF GOD?’*

JOHN ix. 35, 36.

*Jesus said unto him, Dost thou believe on the Son of God? He answered and said, Who is he, Lord, that I might believe on him?*

THE question of our Lord was asked of one whom he had just delivered from blindness, but who knew nothing of the real nature and dignity of the person who had so relieved him. He was persuaded, indeed, that Jesus was a prophet; because he thought that none but a good man and one endowed in a particular manner with heavenly gifts, could have wrought such a miracle as Christ had just performed: and he was cast out by the Jews, that is, he was shut out from their religious worship and church, because he tried to convince them of this truth; and would not join them in saying that Christ was a sinner. In this state Jesus sought him out, and asked him in the words of the text, ‘Dost thou believe on the Son of God?’ The man replied, ‘Who is he, that I should believe on him, for I never heard of such a person, nor do I know where he is to be found? It was an answer of complete ignorance, but of ignorance which was not wilful, nor did it proceed out of an evil heart. Christ therefore teaches him more plainly than he was wont to do to any, except His own peculiar disciples. ‘Thou hast both seen him, and it is he that talketh with

thee.’ The instruction was well received by him to whom it was given: he said directly, Lord, I believe: and in token of his belief, he worshipped Christ immediately.

Jesus said unto him, ‘Dost thou believe on the Son of God?’ It is the very question which He still puts to the conscience of every man, and on the answer given to it does the salvation of every man still depend. How often also is the answer which our hearts would return, the very same with that which was made by the blind man to Christ: ‘Who is he, Lord, that I might believe on Him?’ It is not, indeed, generally the same kind of ignorance, it is not an honest want of instruction, accompanied with a desire to gain it; but it is a wilful and a proud ignorance, like that of Pharaoh when he said to Moses, ‘Who is the Lord, that I should obey his voice to let Israel go! I know not the Lord, neither will I let Israel go.’ And therefore it is, that I have not taken for my text the words in which our Saviour replies again to the blind man: ‘Thou hast both seen him, and it is he that talketh with thee;’ because Christ never would give such an answer to those whose ignorance is their own fault: on the contrary, their eyes are blinded that they cannot see, and all deceivableness of unrighteousness, that is, all the various seductions by which men are led to embrace evil rather than good, is allowed to be practised by Satan against them.

I purpose then to take a few cases of common characters; and to show how many there are who, if asked plainly, whether they believed in the Son of God? would be forced to confess, that they had but very imperfect ideas about Him, and that they did not fully know who He was that they should believe on Him.

First let us see what the question means. It is plain that it means more than a mere nominal belief, like that of a person who had learnt his creed by heart, and had been told in his childhood, who Christ was; without having

in after life thought about Him at all, and yet without ever having his old belief overthrown : so that if he should be put in mind of it, he would still possess it. This is just such a belief as we might have concerning any famous person that we have ever read of ; whose name is of no concern to us in our daily living, and does not present itself to our minds ; but if we were asked concerning it, we should then remember what we had learnt, and say that we had no doubt of the history of it. Such a belief on the Son of God is no belief at all : because I may very well believe that Cæsar Augustus was once an Emperor of Rome, and yet scarcely ever think of him ; for it is of no consequence to my conduct and happiness whether he ever lived or no : but to believe on Christ and not think of Him, is almost a contradiction ; so much does it concern us to think of Him, if we believe what we are told of Him. We know that the belief spoken of in the text, is a true and lively assurance that Christ is indeed the Son of God, from whom we shall receive our eternal sentence of happiness or misery, according as we please Him or no ; and any man who does hold such an assurance strongly, cannot easily avoid being influenced by it in his conduct.

Now first, I believe that there are many who, in a very strict sense, may be said not to know who the Son of God is. They call Him their Saviour, but if they are asked what He has done for them, they would say that He has taught them their duty, and told them that if they did well they should go to heaven hereafter. Thus they consider Him in fact as a great prophet, but are never led to regard Him with that faith and love and adoration, which His character, as revealed in the Scriptures, demands. I am not speaking of those who avow their disbelief in His divinity ; but of those, and I believe they are many, who receiving all the doctrines of our creed without scruple, and confessing, when questioned concerning it, that Jesus

Christ is God and man, do yet habitually lose sight of His office of Saviour and Mediator, and regard Him only as a teacher. Hence it follows that He does not hold His due place in their religion ; they speak of God, and think of Him, and pray to Him without knowing that He can only be approached through His Son ; and their opinions and practice are more those of the disciples of John the Baptist, who preached repentance, than of the Apostles of Christ, who taught, together with repentance towards God, faith towards Jesus Christ our Lord.

Connected with this is a thing which may appear trifling, but which in reality is a very curious symptom of the state of feeling that I have been describing. It is notorious that in writing and in speaking, the name of God, or of Providence, is frequently used, not merely in thoughtless profaneness, but when men wish to use expressions of seriousness and devotion. It is notorious also, that the name of Christ is very seldom used in the same manner, and that if it were used in conversation, people would start at it, as something unusual. It cannot be said that men are restrained by reverence from using the name of the Son, when they do not hesitate to pronounce that of the Father ; neither is it agreeable to the practice or commands of the Apostles to forbear speaking of Him who holds all power in heaven and in earth, and in whose name we are directed to do all things. But the custom has arisen from a wish to comply as much as possible with the language of the world, and to keep out of sight the peculiarities of the Gospel. It is something of the old shame which used to be felt for the scandal of the Cross ; God, is a name which unbelievers may use, for they profess to acknowledge a Supreme Being, and, therefore, they hear the word without offence. But the mention of Christ shows the difference between Christians and unbelievers in the strongest manner ; it is the signal of our

profession which cannot be mistaken, and it at once awakens the hatred of the world. For the Gospel is always thoroughly hated by every one that is evil, because it is truth and righteousness, and reproves the deeds of the wicked; nor is there any better proof that what is called 'natural religion' is of an infinitely lower kind, than the pretended respect shown for it by those who cannot bear the perfect purity of the law of God.

However, it may be asked, what practical mischief is done by regarding our Lord mostly as a teacher, and by not keeping His name so continually in our thoughts? The mischief is this, that we by so doing lose sight of the great corruption of our nature, which needed a Saviour and a Sanctifier much more than a teacher; and by forgetting our own weakness, we shall never gain that strength which through Christ is able to overcome all things; but trying to fulfil the law of works, we shall fall far more short of that law, than if we had endeavoured to attain unto righteousness by the law of faith. In other words, the love of Christ is the most practical principle in the world: of which there is this proof; that all those men whose lives have afforded the brightest examples of goodness, have been full of this love of their Saviour; and gratitude to Him for His redemption, confidence in Him as their Mediator, and a hope to reign with Him hereafter in glory, have been the ruling feelings of their minds. On the other hand, where Christ has been lowered, and has not formed the principal part of men's religion, it is equally matter of experience, that general holiness of life has decayed also; a spirit less devout, less humble, less self-denying, and less affectionate, has arisen in the heart; and the truth of Christ's words has thus been abundantly proved, that, Whoso honoureth not the Son, the same honoureth not the Father; and that no man can come unto the Father but by Him.

A second class of persons, who do not know the Son of God, consists of those to whom the expression of the Apostle, that we walk by faith, and not by sight, appears, if they would confess the truth, utterly wild and unreasonable. They are so far from walking by faith, and not by sight, that they live entirely upon what they see around them, and bestow not a thought upon those things which could only be discerned by faith. The Apostle's words are intended to encourage those, who, having their hearts full of the great blessings promised to them hereafter, are impatient for the enjoyment of them, and who are troubled meanwhile with a variety of evils in the present life. To such persons it was a very needful lesson that they must for a time be contented to take on trust the good things that were promised them, for they could not expect as yet actually to see and enjoy them.

But the persons of whom I am speaking care very little for the blessings of heaven, and have no need that any should advise them to wait patiently for their coming. They have their business and their pleasures, their thoughts, hopes, and affections, all among earthly things, which they see, and know, and enjoy. They have no desire, therefore, to have faith; for whilst present things engage their minds wholly, why should they cherish a lively belief in things that are to come? ‘What a man seeth, why doth he yet hope for?’ and if he has all that he wants, Experience supplies to him the place of Belief. Who then is Christ, that such men should believe on Him? They know nothing of Him or of His kingdom; they feel no longing for His salvation. Many of these men attend church, express their belief in the Gospel, and not unfrequently lament and condemn the progress of infidelity. This they do, not out of pretence, but thinking themselves very sincere; they have a respect for Christianity, and they propose to themselves when they think of such things, to



profit from its reward hereafter. But if those labourers in the parable who were called early in the morning had passed the day in idleness, resolving to begin their work at the eleventh hour, they would in vain have asked for the wages of their labour. And so it is with us : we cannot put off the yoke of Christ for a season, resolving to put it on when all earthly enjoyment shall be ready to fail us. If we live by sight, we must not expect to die by faith.

It is this way of living that has thrown so much dishonour on the Christian name. How are Christians better than other men? it is asked; and we can only answer, that it would be very wonderful if a great many Christians were better than others, while their hopes and inclinations are fixed on just the same objects as those of the world. When Christians are warmly pressing for advancement; when considerations of their own comfort and interest are chiefly looked to in their acceptance or refusal of the situations which they are to hold in life; when they talk of the necessity of maintaining their honour, are jealous of the good opinion of men, and impatient of affront or injury; when they are careless of the spiritual good of their neighbours, and when they estimate so highly the faculties of the understanding, whether accompanied or no by good principles and practice,—how is it possible that they should be better than other men? and how can any one be expected to glorify the name of their heavenly Father by seeing such evil works as they do? In what respect can such persons be said to know Christ or to believe in Him? They may, indeed, be able to repeat their creed by heart; but how far is this from the true saving knowledge of their Saviour! They do not know their own sinfulness and weakness; they do not know anything of the comfort of being forgiven; they are strangers to the happy confidence of a believer's prayer;

they have never felt the earnestness of a Christian's hope. They are thus in absolute ignorance of the nature of the Gospel, and know not even the common commandments of the Scripture.

How often do we hear men of this sort well endowed, it may be, with natural abilities and human knowledge, complain of particular doctrines as being the doctrines only of divines, and at variance, as they say, with the principles of other men! I mean such doctrines as these: that sensual lusts are to be reckoned among the greatest sins; that self-indulgence is dangerous to the soul's welfare; that natural inclinations are not to be passed over as excusable, but to be carefully resisted, as the marks of our great corruption. The humblest Christian knows very well that these are not the doctrines of men, but of the Scripture: whereas such persons as I have been speaking of, while they call themselves Christians, are so totally ignorant of their religion, that they attack and revile its precepts, pretending that they are merely the precepts of the clergy. Hence it is that so many books, not written by avowed unbelievers, are full of principles quite opposite to those of the Gospel; because there are so many persons who, not disclaiming the name of Christians altogether, have yet no clear knowledge of what a Christian ought to be.

But how foolish, on every calculation, is such indecisive behaviour as this! Would that they would take one side or the other; that they would either be servants of Christ in earnest, or renounce Him openly, and say that they have nothing to do with Jesus of Nazareth and His salvation. Happy, indeed, would it be for the Church of Christ, if all its false friends were to declare themselves its enemies! the Gospel would then no more be reproached with the scandal of their evil lives, and the true believers would be drawn more closely to one another, and would

feel the name of Christian to be a real tie of brotherhood. But how much more happy if any of those who know not the Son of God might be brought to learn who He is, and to believe and to worship Him in spirit and in truth ! And, under God, there is no way so likely to draw them home, as for those who do know Christ, and believe in Him and love Him, to increase their knowledge and love more and more, and to bring their lives to a more perfect conformity with His Gospel. That in many things we offend all, is a truth which the consciences of every one of us here assembled can abundantly confirm ; but that our offences may daily become fewer and less flagrant should be at once our labour and our prayer. And for all who in sincerity of heart do thus strive to increase their faith and knowledge of their Saviour, His words to the blind man are a most comfortable prophecy of what He will one day say to them, ' that they have seen him, and he has talked with them ; ' on earth, by His word and Spirit : in heaven, by His presence revealed to them, when they shall see Him as He is.

## SERMON XVIII.

*MAN'S JUDGMENT AND GOD'S JUDGMENT.*

1 CORINTHIANS iv. 3, 4.

*With me it is a very small thing that I should be judged of you, or of man's judgment; yea, I judge not mine own self. For I know nothing of myself; yet am I not hereby justified: but he that judgeth me is the Lord.*

THE great portion of mankind are in the habit of reversing these words of the Apostle; 'With them it is a very small thing that they should be judged by the Scriptures, or by God's judgment; but he that judgeth them is themselves or the world.' For though God's word can give them no encouragement or hope, yet do they not feel hereby condemned, so long as the voice of the world, or that of their own hearts, both equally deceitful, tell them that all is right with them. But what is more surprising is, that many people who, if we were to ask them which they most regarded, would be quite shocked at the thought of setting up the opinions of men against the word of God; yet in fact are, in their practice, much more governed by their regard to the former than to the latter. The truth is, that the fear of man is a feeling which grows up with us from our infancy; and we are not aware, perhaps, of the full dominion which it possesses over us. It is often encouraged by the very education which is designed to root out other bad habits; and it is so disguised under

fair names, or mixed up with something that is amiable, or at least allowable, that we become enslaved to it without suspicion. Combined with this, it happens often that they who do read the Bible pass over much too slightly those passages which speak of the friendship of the world being enmity with God; of its being a bad sign when all men speak well of us; and other things to the same effect: satisfying themselves with the explanation, that all this language referred only to the heathen world, and that in a Christian country it is not applicable. Yet it is too much to assume that the world is really become Christian, because the Gospel in this country is the religion established by law.

The mischief which arises from this habitual anxiety about the good opinion of men is more than can be told. It is speaking strongly, but truly, to say that it makes the whole of our life unchristian; that it dethrones our Maker from His lawful authority, and sets up an idol in His place; that it makes us heathens as completely, for all purposes of our souls' danger, as if we were to bow down and offer sacrifice to a graven image. Let us then first see what the case actually is amongst a very great number of people: and then examine what the Gospel requires it to be, and how far it allows or encourages that natural feeling which makes us desirous to win the good opinion of our neighbours, and which is the origin of those mighty motives of human action—the love of honour, and the fear of reproach.

The foundation of a great part of the evil is the want of accustoming children, from a very early period, to be influenced by the love or fear of God. On the contrary, they have too often no other motives placed before them than those of pleasing their parents, of being thought well of by all their friends, of being liked by every body if they are good, and disliked if they are bad. In this manner

they learn to attach a value to the opinion of others for its own sake, and without any distinction whether the world in general is capable of forming a just opinion or not. Besides, it is natural to wish to be thought well of by other people, because we often derive solid benefits from a good reputation, and great inconvenience from a bad one; so that here is a great temptation not only to care too much for the opinion of men, but to care for it without any regard to the good or bad character of those who entertain it; because a bad man, no less than a good one, may have it in his power to do us harm if he thinks ill of us. The actual convenience or inconvenience of being well or ill esteemed by our neighbours is apt then to make us, of itself, too anxious about the praise and favour of men; and this tendency, instead of being checked by education, is too often encouraged by the keeping out of sight the higher motives of the love and fear of God, and by holding out the praise or favour of men, under one name or another, as the continual and chief excitement to good conduct.

In some states of life, as in the army and navy, for example, this is carried to a still greater length; for there the maintaining an unblemished character in the eyes of men of his own profession, is really exalted into an idol to which every thing else is sacrificed; and honour, which is but another name for the good opinion of men, is confessedly the very jewel of a soldier's life, and without which, life, in his eyes, loses all its value. But here is a double evil: for not only is the fear of man put into the place of the fear of God, but it is the fear of a class of men who are naturally apt to attach the highest value to a quality of a very second-rate importance, namely, courage; and to think comparatively little of a failure in the much higher points of justice, charity, and self-denial. Nor yet is it the better part of courage only that is esteemed: it

is not only firmness, and patient fortitude, and a resolute contempt of danger when it stands in the way of duty; but it is also that sort of courage which is closely connected with pride and selfishness—an impatience of affront, and a love of superiority. Here, then, the judgment of men does not only stand in the place of the judgment of God, but it absolutely holds a different language: it teaches us to value qualities which God disregards, or even which He condemns; and it draws off our attention from those higher virtues, without which every soul is abhorred by Him, and is liable to His heaviest punishment. And when men lead a life whose main object is to be approved by such a judgment, it must needs be that their principles and conduct are far different from those which their Maker requires of them: that they are often hurried into crimes of which they never have the means of repenting.

But it is most useful to remark, that neither in this case nor in any other are great and flagrant crimes the means by which souls are generally lost. Murder and suicide, those horrible extremities into which the fear of man's opinion sometimes leads, are in comparison seldom committed; and every one flatters himself that he would shrink from the commission of them. 'Is thy servant a dog, that he should do this thing?' would be the answer of many a man, if he were told that the feeling on which he was acting in his daily practice were precisely those which might bring him one day or other to become a murderer. Nay, even if we do not think we could resist the temptation, supposing it to fall in our way; if, as is very often the case with duelling, we know that we should commit the act if circumstances called upon us to do it; yet as most men do get through life without being engaged in serious quarrels, we trust that we shall have the same fortune, and that whatever the guilt of such a practice may be, we shall never run the risk of incurring it.

Still more with those most painful cases of self-murder, where men kill themselves because they cannot bear some stain upon their characters, although perhaps it may relate to such points as are weaknesses rather than vices ; we all agree that such conduct is indeed most unchristian, and we do not fear lest we should ourselves do likewise. But the sin of these wretched persons, or of those who lose their own lives or take away the lives of others in private quarrels, does not consist so much in their last dreadful acts, as in that evil temper of mind, and in those evil principles which finally led to them. If every man who looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart : if not only he who kills, but he who is angry with his brother without a cause, shall be in danger of the judgment ; then not only are the duellist and the suicide guilty of murder, and liable to God's heaviest judgment, but all those also who cherish in their hearts a fear of man's reproach and an anxiety for worldly honour, as the governing motives of their conduct.

But, indeed, it is in this earlier stage that the root of the whole evil lies, and there alone can we hope to offer the remedy. A man who has grown up from childhood, and who has lived for years afterwards, in the habit of valuing his character in the eyes of men above everything else, cannot consent to lose the idol which he has so long worshipped, and it is of no use to tell him to do it. He would answer, that he would much rather die ; and his conduct on the first occasion would confirm his answer. When men have been so confirmed in unchristian ways of thinking, that they really talk of defending their honour as if it were their life, it is too late then to try to reform them. But before they have suffered such feelings to take root, they might with better hope be recalled to a true sense of the value of man's opinion, and how entirely it is



their duty to disregard it as a pretended guide through life. No man can serve two masters; nor is it possible for the fear of God to exercise its due authority, where the fear of man is a prevailing principle of conduct.

But it may be said, that he who is indifferent to the opinion of others, must lose one great check upon his vices: that in fact, they who seem least to care for the censure of mankind, are persons who run into greater excesses of self-indulgence, and pride, and obstinacy, than other men; and that in proportion as they despise the judgment of others, they magnify themselves in their own conceits. It is very true, that they who are without God can but go from one extreme of evil to another: if they throw away the unsafe support of the world's opinion, they merely stagger to and fro in the extravagances of their own darkened hearts. But what says the Apostle? 'With me it is a very small thing to be judged of you or of man's judgment: yea, I judge not mine own self, but he that judgeth me is the Lord.' It is better, indeed, to fear other men than to fear no one: and there is worse selfishness and worse pride in consulting only our own judgment of all our actions, than in following eagerly after the praise of others. But all pride, all selfishness, all evil of whatsoever kind it be, is excluded, if we set ourselves to learn the wisdom of God. 'He that judgeth us is the Lord.' Here is a check upon all self-indulgence, upon all carelessness of living, upon all hardness to reproof, much more effectual than any fear of the judgment of man. And here too is a freedom from all unworthy compliances, a liberty and dignity and true independence given to the character, which can nowhere else be found, pure, and unmixed with pride and contempt of our neighbours. But the service of God is perfect freedom; and He requireth truth in the inward parts, and trieth the very heart and reins; thus only teaching us to unite firmness

with humility, and an intense watchfulness over our conduct with a perfect tranquillity and peace of mind, as to the light in which it may be viewed by the world.

We are now come to the latter part of our subject,—the question, how far the Scripture allows us to desire or to care for the good opinion of our neighbours? Now, in the first place it is most clear, that to gain a good character with men must never be our chief object; if it is, then the praise and esteem of men will be our only reward: and we shall fall short of the kingdom of heaven. Christ has told us this expressly with regard to two of the greatest of virtues, piety and alms-giving; He has said that if we either pray to God or do good to our neighbour for the sake of gaining a character of piety and charity amongst men, we have no reward to look to from our Father which is in heaven. There is an age doubtless at which the desire of pleasing our parents is the only one which we are able to understand; the approbation of its father and its mother is to a young child what the approbation of God is to older persons,—it is a motive which God Himself has sanctioned. But I am sure that it is the duty of every parent to begin betimes in teaching his child to know more fully Whose he is, and Whom he must serve; and to accustom him to desire above all things the favour and approbation of his Maker. If this be once secured as the master principle of our conduct, all will surely be right: a child will know that in trying to please his parents he is obeying the will of God; and that as he is commanded to honour them, so he may receive with delight their praise and their good opinion, as a sort of earnest of the favour of God. And besides our parents, the approbation and praise of good and wise men is to be received with thankfulness and pleasure, just as we should value their friendship or their love. This is one of those earthly blessings which if sought for only in its due order,

as coming after our great object, may be lawfully desired and thankfully enjoyed by every Christian.

But it is only the approbation of the wise and good ; in other words, of those who are Christ's true servants, of whom this can properly be said. In lesser matters, the praise of other men may be given with as true a judgment as that of Christians. Of our skill in any trade, or art, or science, or profession ; of the rudeness or elegance of our manners, of the power or weakness of our understandings, bad men can judge as well as good, worldly men as well as Christians. But in all that constitutes worth or vileness ; in all points of moral conduct, in all questions of right and wrong, which in their importance are indeed all in all, no opinion but that of a Christian is worthy of an instant's notice ; no praise but his is of the slightest value, no blame but his is other than contemptible. There are many virtues which are naturally amiable, and many vices which are as naturally hateful ; in many points, therefore, the notions of the world and those of Christians will agree in praising and condemning the same things. But even here, they will each praise and condemn on different grounds ; and in every case the opinion of the Christian is the only one really to be valued ; whether it happen that the voices which join in his sentence be few or many. Not that any one set of men are entitled to any natural superiority over the rest : but because true Christians have the mind of Christ, and their praise or censure is only the faithful interpreter of the secret judgment passed upon our every action by our Maker and our Saviour. For it is to this judgment of God that all our thoughts should anxiously be turned, and from its decree alone is honour to be looked for, or shame dreaded. The best of Christians are fallible : and we should remember that it was to Christians that St. Paul was writing when he used the words in the text,

‘With me it is a very small thing that I should be judged of you, or of man’s judgment.’

So then we must learn to act simply according to the word of God, and in the hope of the honour that cometh from God only. By so doing, we shall indeed most generally win the love and approbation of good Christians, and may thankfully receive this earthly reward over and above, as godliness hath the promise of the life which now is, and of that which is to come. Or, if we see our conduct blamed by the good, it may justly make us fear that if they condemn us, God who is greater than they, will condemn us also; and it affords us strong cause for examining our ways, and comparing them carefully with the word of God, that we may see wherein we have offended. It is a part of humility to think that as we belong to Christ, so do others also: and that they who are guided by the same law, and the same Spirit, may judge more justly of our conduct than we can ourselves. But for those who have not our law, and who cannot receive that Spirit, nor have any practical knowledge of Him,—who are they that judge another man’s servant? To our own master we stand or fall, and to Him alone. They have neither part nor lot in the matter, for their hearts are not right in the sight of God: and their favour or reproach, considered in themselves, and unless where they happen to agree with the law of God, are neither to be coveted nor dreaded.

## SERMON XIX.

*THE FEAR OF MAN AND THE FEAR OF GOD.*

2 SAMUEL xxiv. 14.

*Let us fall now into the hand of the Lord; for his mercies are great :  
and let me not fall into the hand of man.*

THE subject on which I spoke last Sunday is one of so great extent, and leads to so many considerations connected with it, that it could not be wholly comprehended within the limits of a single sermon. I propose now, therefore, to continue it, and to examine particularly the different effects produced by the fear of God and the fear of man in the case of sorrow for sin in ourselves; and of the manner in which we behave to others, when they have sinned; and then to state on what grounds we ought to be cautious of incurring the ill opinion of others, although in itself we ought to be very indifferent to it.

It is plain, in the first place, that the fear of man may and does very commonly prevent the commission of those greater crimes which are punished by human laws; and that it reaches exactly that very class of persons who would not be restrained by the fear of God. It is clear also that, as the world now is, there are a great many lesser faults, a great many meannesses, a great many unfairnesses and unkindnesses, which nothing but the fear of man's displeasure, of being disgraced in the world, and feeling

serious inconvenience from that disgrace, does in fact restrain. There is no doubt, therefore, that society is much benefited by the existence of this check; because, in the first place, any check upon wickedness is better than none: and secondly, because society cares little for the motives of men's actions; and so long as evil is not done, it is not concerned to know whether the fear of man or the fear of God prevented it. But, though the well-being of society is a very great point, yet it is not the greatest: because all the good which any one, or which all men now alive, can derive from the most perfect laws most perfectly administered, or from the force of public opinion checking every display of bad conduct most entirely, will be over in less than a hundred years at the longest; but the good which any man can get from acting upon the fear of God, will last for ever and ever. Christians then are not insensible to the worldly good which is produced by the fear of man; but they think that it is not enough; that there must be some better thing provided, without which it cannot be made perfect. And therefore they are anxious to enforce a motive which would do all the good that is now done, and a great deal more besides of an infinitely higher kind. If a man does not rob me, or cheat me, because he is afraid of being punished or of losing his character, I have the advantage certainly of keeping my own property untouched, owing to his fear; but if he abstains from doing wrong, because he wishes to please God, this better motive does for me all that the lower one did, and it works out besides an everlasting blessing for him whom it actuates.

But supposing that a man has committed a fault, let us observe then the different effects of the fear of man and the fear of God, both in himself and in those connected with him. First of all, in himself, the fear of man leads directly to concealment and to all those acts of mean-

ness and falsehood which are practised to escape detection and punishment. If these fail, and the offence is laid open, and the disgrace or other penalty cannot be avoided, it may at the best restrain the offender from committing the same fault again, but it can only produce a change in his conduct, not in his heart : and it is very likely that he will only try to hide his sin for the future with better success, or to provide, if detected, some better security against punishment. With different dispositions, however, the effect is different. Some men of a proud and bad temper, are so irritated by disgrace and punishment, that they entertain feelings of general disgust and hatred towards mankind ; their regard for those who have the nearest claim on their affection is overcome by their bad passions ; they desert all their duties, and pretend to justify themselves by railing against the falsehood and unworthiness of the world. Others again, of a less sullen and less haughty spirit, and with feelings of diseased acuteness, are utterly unable to endure the censure and the contempt of their neighbours ; they are driven to despair, and only think of hurrying out of life, to escape the miseries of their actual condition. Persons of this sort, when suffering acutely, are objects of great compassion : the pangs which they endure might, under better guidance, lead them to true comfort ; but, as it is, they are mere useless torment : agony without hope and without benefit. Thus it is that the sorrow of the world worketh death.

Nor is the same feeling, the fear of man, less apt to lead us astray in our treatment of others who have offended, than in the case of our own faults. For what is the feeling which leads so often to such merciless and unchristian severity towards offenders on the part of their families and connexions, but a spirit of worldly pride, mixed perhaps with some resentment for the disgrace which has been brought upon the honour of their name ? That it is not a

Christian indignation against sin, is clear from this, that the severity is shown only in those cases where the offence committed brings with it dishonour in the eyes of the world, and not in those where it is only a breach of the law of God. Hence many fathers who would drive from their sight an unchaste daughter, express no displeasure at all, or only of the gentlest kind, against an unchaste son. Hence the different measure so often and so commonly shown to the adulterer and adulteress. The commandment of God in these cases shows no distinction of sexes; there is one sentence of condemnation for the sins of fornication and adultery, be they committed by whom they may. But because a woman's offence brings disgrace upon her family, it is visited very often with as great an excess of worldly indignation, as the same offence in man is passed over with an excessive lenity.

Let us now turn to the effect produced, both on the sinner himself, and on those connected with him, by the fear of God. Repentance, of which all men more or less have need, is a subject of which we can scarcely hear too often: and there is nothing, as it appears to me in the whole of the Scripture, which shows a more perfect fitness to the wants and nature of man, than what is declared concerning this point. Suppose a man immediately after the commission of some great sin, to be strongly impressed with the fear of God, and at the same time to have the promises of the Gospel made known to him. As the fear of man leads to concealment, or to obstinacy or to despair, so does the fear of God bring us to confession, and humility, and a grateful hope. In God are united perfect justice and perfect mercy: 'He forgiveth iniquity, and transgression, and sin; but he will by no means clear the guilty.' So then there is every thing to humble and to cleanse us; nothing to irritate or drive us to despair. The terrors of the Lord, far unlike the dread of man, will remain in all



their fearfulness till the heart is thoroughly touched and changed; till the corrupt desire is condemned as well as the corrupt conduct. Till this be done, nothing can often them; concealment, outward reform, inward agony, all are of no avail,—‘There is no peace, saith my God, to the wicked,’ and until the heart be changed we are still wicked. But when the Holy Ghost has done His work, and our hearts have willingly yielded to His influence; when we have abhorred our sin and cast it away from us with all sincerity, then the terrors vanish at once, and the sun breaks forth without a cloud. It is like those climates where there is no spring; but in a few days the whole face of the country changes from winter to summer: the trees are clothed with leaves, and the air becomes clear, and warm, and genial. Then God declares Himself to us as a reconciled Father in Christ Jesus: He hastens to raise us and comfort us; when we are yet a great way off, our Father sees us, and has compassion on us. Let me repeat also the words that follow in the parable, ‘The father saw his son, and had compassion on him, and ran, and fell on his neck, and kissed him.’ These are the expressions chosen by our Lord himself, to express in the strongest possible manner the readiness of God to receive the penitent. While the sinner is impenitent, there is nothing shown towards him but severity: the moment he is melted, there is nothing but the most free and unupbraiding mercy. ‘Thy sins are forgiven thee;’ was our Lord’s address to all those who truly repented.

What becomes then of those bitter sufferings and that horrible despair with which the fear of man often stifles the rising feelings of repentance? It is not sorrow for our offence that can save us from earthly shame; it cannot wash away the stains which our character has once contracted; it cannot clear the appearance of grave displeasure; it cannot soften the manifest suspicion of a cold for-

givenness, with which the sinner, even when penitent, is received by his fellow men. Nor is this always a matter of blame ; for man cannot read the heart ; and as he cannot be sure of the sincerity of another's repentance till a course of consistent good conduct has proved it, so neither can he forget what is called for as an example to others ; and he fears to take off all punishment at once, even from the penitent, lest others should be encouraged to commit the same offence, in the hope of gaining by a counterfeit repentance the same easy forgiveness. But the fear of God leading to a true repentance, while it saves us from despair, and fills us with comfort by the assurance of God's unreserved pardon and fatherly love, yet does it at the same time fill us with humility, and dispose us to bear with all meekness our worldly punishment of shame or loss, as what our sins have justly merited. Nor, again, can it be said to give a sinner encouragement too soon, or to foster carelessness and self-satisfaction. With every changing disposition of our hearts, the countenance of God is changed towards us too ; and we may be well assured that there is no change within us so trifling as not to be observed by Him with whom we have to do.

And as God sees what is passing within us, so has He furnished us with a certain glass in which we may discern His dispositions—the glass, namely, of His holy word. It is the especial value of the Scriptures, that they contain texts suited to every condition and state of our souls ; and if there are some which seem to contradict each other, it is because they are addressed to different persons, and in order to give to each, as strongly as possible, the medicine which his case requires. So long, then, as a man is entirely humble and penitent, he may apply to himself all those comfortable promises of full and entire forgiveness with which the Scripture abounds ; for comfort and encouragement are what he for the present most needs. But

as soon as ever he begins to presume upon God's favour, to think lightly of his own unworthiness, and to relax in his watchfulness over his conduct, then the sterner sentences of the law are addressed to him; the fearful threatenings denounced against the stout-hearted, against them that are at ease in Zion, against those that laugh and are full, are all turned against him; and what worldly censure or worldly punishment can urge him so strongly to flee from evil and to choose the good, as that perfect mixture of kindness and strictness which is displayed in the dispensations of God?

So much, then, for the effect produced on the sinner himself by the fear of God. Let us now consider how it acts upon us with regard to our treatment of the sins of others.

In the first place, it will lead us to judge rightly of the comparative guilt of different offences, and to value them, not according to the opinion of men, but according to the word of God. We shall thus be sometimes more severe towards a fault than we otherwise should have been; but we shall always be led to act with a truer kindness towards the person of the offender. In our care of our children and of our families, in our behaviour towards those with whom we are any way connected, we shall follow, no doubt, a very strict and high standard of duty: waste of time and opportunities, a love of pleasure, a careless spirit, or a worldly one, will be all of them things which we shall strive to check wherever our power or our influence may enable us. But in our personal treatment of those who have done wrong, we shall carefully put away those feelings which lead to severity further than God has sanctioned; we shall take care to be angry without sin, that is, to keep our anger unmixed with any selfish feelings of wounded pride or disappointment. There have been instances on record, of men retaining throughout their

lives so strong a sense of some particular crime, by which they have been directly or indirectly the sufferers, that they never could prevail on themselves to forgive the offender. Now, most assuredly, such unforgiving persons are amongst those on whom the judgment of God will fall most heavily, and of whom it may be said that mercy itself rejoices in their judgment. It is in vain that they would talk of the greatness of the injury done to them, of the dishonour which has been brought upon them, of the stain which has been thrown upon a family and a name hitherto without reproach. How will such excuses be received before the judgment-seat of Christ, when brought forward to justify disobedience to one of His most solemn and most earnestly repeated commands? They who plead them will only be reminded of the warning given to them in the Scriptures, ‘If ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your heavenly Father forgive your trespasses.’ But he who looks upon sin with the eyes of a Christian, will here, as in all other things, strive after his imperfect measure to copy the perfections of God. He will be ready and eager to forgive, even as God, for Christ’s sake, has forgiven him; but he will not be too indulgent to an offender, lest by a false kindness he should do him a real harm, and mar the sincerity of his repentance, by making all things appear smooth to him too suddenly: but he will most carefully watch himself, lest in his severity he should not be seeking God’s honour, but his own; and he will remember that the character of a judge ill becomes him who has himself cause every night and morning to pray to God, the Judge of all, for forgiveness of his own offences.

It is remarkable, however, that while the Scripture enforces the most entire indifference to the censure of the world, and condemns so often and so justly the fear of man; yet it teaches us to shock no man’s opinion of us arrogantly, and to consider, *in all trifling matters*, as

much as we can, how we may please others ; not for our own sake, but for theirs. So nicely and beautifully drawn is the picture of Christian perfection, that it inculcates at once the most entire independence of mind, and the most delicate consideration for the feelings of others ; and the same Apostle who had said that it was to him a very small thing to be judged of man's judgment, said also in the very same Epistle, ' that he had made himself servant unto all, that he might gain the more souls to Christ ; that he was made all things to all men, that he might by all means save some.' But here is the excellence of Christian compliance, that it regards the favour of men, not as an end, but as a means ; it does not covet it for its own sake, but that men, by learning to look upon Christians favourably, might be persuaded to become altogether Christians themselves.

It is plain, however, that the path of our duty becomes here exceedingly difficult ; and that we are in danger, the ministers of the Gospel particularly, of deceiving ourselves as to our real motive, and of loving popularity and the praise of men for its own sake, and not as a means of recommending to those who admire us the name and service of our Lord. Here then is a very anxious and important subject of inquiry, which may well deserve our separate consideration.

## SERMON XX.

## CHRISTIAN COMPLIANCE.

1 CORINTHIANS x. 33.

*I please all men in all things, not seeking mine own profit, but the profit of many, that they may be saved.*

AT the end of my last sermon, after speaking of the utter mischief of following the opinion of men as a motive of action, I said that the Gospel did not permit us nevertheless needlessly to shock the feelings of others, but commanded us, on the contrary, to try to please other people; for their sakes, however, and not for our own. I said, too, that here the path of our duty became exceedingly difficult: because there was a great risk of our being led into false and wrong compliances, under pretence of winning over worldly persons to a love of the Gospel: and thus, instead of gaining them, we might chance to lose ourselves. However, as a duty does not become less a duty because it is difficult, it will be my endeavour to point out the way in which, by God's grace, we may safely walk in it, without falling into error either on the right hand or on the left.

The first thing, then, which we should bear in mind, is the motive from which we should try to please our neighbours. 'I please all men in all things, not seeking mine own profit, but the profit of many.' This was the

motive of St. Paul ; and so long as he acted on it, he was in no danger of being led into any improper condescension or flattery. It was not for his own sake that he was anxious to please every one, but for theirs ; it was not to gain favour, or to escape reproach and persecution, but simply that the Gospel might not be hindered from any unamiableness or foolishness on the part of those who taught it. In this, as in every part of our duty, what is called in Scripture ‘a single eye,’ or ‘purity of heart,’ is the surest guide which we can follow. ‘If thine eye be single,’ says Christ, ‘thy whole body shall be full of light.’ For, as most of the difficulties in our practice arise not from any want of understanding, but from a fault of the heart, from a wish to serve at once both God and the world, so shall we find it comparatively easy to do always just what we ought to do, if we really have a sincere and hearty inclination to do so.

If a man, therefore, wishes to avoid the danger of trying to please the world too much, he must set out in life with a full conviction of that truth which I have tried to establish in my two preceding sermons, namely, that the praise or good opinion of men who are not really and practically Christians, is in itself utterly worthless. Till a man is convinced of this, the duty of not giving needless offence to any is not that of which he most needs to be reminded. I am aware, therefore, that the generality of mankind are more likely to do wrong by over-compliance than by the opposite fault of over-bluntness and indifference. Yet there is a use sometimes in laying before our minds a picture of Christian perfection in all its parts, that we may see how fully it provides for every want of the human mind, and with what excellent wisdom it avoids every faulty extreme ; and there may be some also who have suffered natural pride to wear the semblance of Christian firmness, and who delight to act without the least

consideration for the feelings of others, not because they desire to please only Christ, but because they cannot condescend to please any one except themselves. Yet more, there is a much larger class of persons, who in their conduct do not think enough of pleasing their neighbours, but who act rather from carelessness and thoughtlessness than from pride. They do not despise others, but they do not take the trouble of thinking about them. They are not accustomed to consider the consequences of their actions, but at the best, if the thing be not directly sinful, they will do it when they have a mind to it, whatever censure may be passed upon them. Like all men who act without any settled principles, they will sometimes please their neighbours when they ought not, and sometimes disgust them when they ought not ; that is, they are anxious, when they think about it, to win the favour of mankind, but when they are not strictly thinking about it, they are only anxious to please themselves, and say that the world may speak of them and their conduct as it chooses.

In speaking of the duty of pleasing others, it will not be necessary to dwell on the ordinary courtesies and lesser kindnesses of our daily living, any further than to observe that none of these things, however trifling, are beneath the notice of a good man ; and that they are all to a Christian parts of his Christian duty, according to that well known and most valuable command of the Apostle, ‘Whether you eat or drink, or whatsoever you do, do all to the glory of God.’ But I mention one thing, because, I think, we are most of us apt to be somewhat deficient in it ; and that is, in the trying to suit ourselves to the tastes and views of persons, whose professions or inclinations or situations in life differ widely from our own. It has been said, and I believe truly, that as a general rule, no man can fall into conversation with another, without being able to learn something valuable from him. But in order to get at this



benefit, there must be something of an accommodating spirit on both sides ; each must be ready to hear candidly, and to answer fairly : each must try to please the other.

We all suffer from a want of acquaintance with the habits, and opinions, and feelings, of different classes of society, which hinders us from contributing as we might to each other's benefit. How little, for example, do the rich and the poor really know of each other ! how little, for the most part, do men of different pursuits, even though of equal rank, men of the world and retired studious men, and persons of many other classes which might be named,—how little can they enter into each other's views of life, or each understand many of the notions and pleasures which are most familiar to the other ? This is not the place to enter into an examination of the worldly inconveniences arising from this mutual want of knowledge ; but the evil which it concerns us here to attend to is this ; that religious men often lose much of their influence from not understanding the characters of others, and from not being understood themselves. Their language is spoken as if to the air, as all language must be, which is addressed to persons whose dispositions we have not studied, and the nature of whose opinions we have not fully considered. On the other hand, it is received with indifference, as the language of a visionary ; nor is justice done to the motives from which it proceeds, because the world in general are unable to estimate the Christian character. In order, then, to promote a mutual knowledge of each other, nothing is so effectual as a mutual desire to please ; for we can hardly please another so much as by seeming to wish to enter into his views, to take an interest in his pursuits, and to listen to any information that he can give us.

And this brings us to a point about which there has been much difference of opinion, concerning the degree, namely, to which Christians should interest themselves in worldly

knowledge, farther than may be required by their particular profession. There is a danger, doubtless, in the pursuit of all knowledge, lest it should puff us up, and lead us away from true Christian humility. So also is there a danger, as Cecil has truly observed, in trying to please others, by taking an interest in their pursuits; we may lose, he says, our own Christian character, while endeavouring to accommodate ourselves to their worldly one. There is indeed danger ever besetting us, but there are many occasions on which it is better to overcome it than to fly from it. In the case of entering deeply into matters of worldly science and knowledge, there is need of constant prayer and much reading of the Scriptures to keep up in our minds a due sense of the paramount importance of that Divine knowledge which must be received with childlike simplicity in the school of Christ. But a mind thus fortified by constant recourse to the fountain of all spiritual strength, comes to the study of human knowledge with a matchless superiority over all other men, and is enabled to derive from it incalculably greater advantages. Why should we leave science, and politics, and literature, only in the possession of unbelievers? In the hands of Christians, they each hold only their proper place, and are made to teach lessons of true wisdom. 'I have more understanding than my teachers, for thy testimonies are my study,' are the words of the Psalmist: and I am sure that if a Christian and unbeliever, gifted with equal natural powers, were to apply themselves together to the study of any branch of moral knowledge, the Christian would follow it with a far better understanding of it, and would draw from it conclusions far more just and more profitable.

But there is one way of pleasing our neighbours which, perhaps, the Apostle had more particularly in his mind when he wrote the words of the text: and on which it concerns us to dwell with especial attention. I mean

pleasing them by not shocking their notions of right and wrong, by acting up to the expectations which they form of us, and avoiding to lead them into evil by a careless or sinful example. In all these points there is a duty imposed upon us, which the Scripture teaches us to regard as very important ; and which belongs to that high perfection of character to which the Gospel labours to bring us. We are to think of the effect which our words and actions may have upon others ; we are to consider the misconstruction and misinterpretation to which they are liable ; and that although perfectly innocent perhaps in themselves, they may, by being ill understood, tend to increase sin in others. We do a great deal of harm when we disappoint the expectations entertained concerning us. If we have borne the character of being sincere Christians, men will look to us for Christian principles and Christian practice ; and if they do not find them, they will be shaken in their belief, they will think that the holiness of the Gospel is a thing quite out of their reach ; and that while many talk about it, all are in reality equally indifferent to it.

I am very ready to allow that this applies above all to ministers of the Gospel ; that men will not only expect more from them, but will be even more shaken in their belief by their bad conduct than by that of any other class of persons. Still it does not apply to ministers only, but to every body who is believed to be a Christian ; and therefore all must be equally careful to let their light shine before men, that they may see our good works, and glorify our heavenly Father. It will very many times happen that we must live above what our neighbours require of us, if we hope to enter into the kingdom of heaven ; but it can rarely or never be safe for us to live below it. Nothing is more fatal to the good conduct of people in a lower station than the suspicion which they sometimes entertain of the sincerity of those above them. Such a suspicion at once destroys

in their eyes the value of any act of kindness, and takes away the effect of any good advice which they may hear either in private or from the pulpit. I know that this suspicion is very often extremely unjust; but it is not the less our duty to do everything to prevent it from being felt; and one great means of doing this is to be very careful never to use a language in any of our addresses to others, public or private, which they can at once see not to be natural to us, or agreeable to the ordinary tone of our sentiments. Even a child has very soon sense enough to perceive the inconsistency of a passionate parent's reproofs to him on the score of temper; of an indolent and careless parent's remonstrances with him against idleness and inattention. Much more, then, will the poor turn a deaf ear to our admonitions, if, while urging them to be patient under the hardness of their lot, we are ourselves visibly disturbed at any little worldly vexations which may befall us: if, while saying that they ought to be content and comfort themselves with the hopes of eternal glory, we ourselves are known to be keenly endeavouring to better our own condition, and seem in no respect to be cheered by those prospects of eternal happiness, which we speak of so warmly to others.

These are, indeed, greater points, and which concern us on account of our own salvation more than from their effect upon others; but there are things of less magnitude, in which, perhaps, the greatest part of the mischief which they contain arises from the impression which they must produce on those who witness them. Hastinesses of word or deed, nay even, sometimes, a mere injudicious use of our Christian liberty, may shock sincere but ignorant Christians, who do not make sufficient allowance for those remains of natural evil which even God's Holy Spirit does not entirely overcome, nor yet consider, that in the use of means towards attaining the great end of holiness, different tempers and

different minds are allowed a large freedom of choice. For instance, in the observation of the Sunday. Christians may differ widely as to the peculiar holiness which they are required to attach to that day, and the manner in which it best becomes them to employ it. But there can be no doubt that many sincere, though perhaps weak believers, would be extremely shocked at any departure from those practices which they have been taught themselves to consider essential to the keeping of the Lord's Day holy: and there can be no doubt, also, that we are bound to respect the scruples of such persons, and not needlessly to act in a manner which they would judge unchristian. If we ask the question, 'Why is my liberty judged by another man's conscience?' the answer is ready; 'If thy brother be grieved with thy conduct, now walkest thou not charitably; destroy not him with thy liberty for whom Christ died.' For if we are seen by an ignorant man to do what he considers unlawful, there is either the chance of our mere example tempting him to do the like, while it does not enlighten his ignorance, and thus leading him to do what he himself thinks wrong; or else it may perplex and unsettle his faith, if he sees those whom he considered to be Christians, living, as he deems it, in violation of their Lord's commandments.

We are bound therefore to please all men; to recommend ourselves to them by a courteous and amiable and sensible behaviour, that they may see the excellent practical effects of Christ's Gospel; not to shock them by any carelessness of word or deed which may make them suspect us of hypocrisy, and so fall into that most deadly error, a general suspicion of all human goodness; nor yet to take so much liberty, even in indifferent matters, as may disturb those whose notions are more narrow; and perhaps induce them to sin, by following our example, without faith that they in so doing are acting innocently.

## SERMON XXI.

*THE TRIAL TIME OF FAITH.*

MALACHI iii. 16.

*Then they that feared the Lord spake often one to another, and the Lord hearkened and heard it, and a book of remembrance was written before him for them that feared the Lord, and that thought upon his name.*

THE Prophet Malachi lived some time after the restoration of the Jews to their own country and the building of the second temple, when they had been brought back from the captivity in Babylon. He was the last of all the prophets, and flourished about four hundred years before the coming of Christ. Of this period of four hundred years, therefore, the Bible tells us nothing; nor, as far as the Jews are concerned, can we learn much about it from any other quarter. We know only that they were left during this time just under similar spiritual circumstances to those in which we ourselves are living now. I mean, that they were left in a state of trial to see how far they would make use of the means of grace already given; that the revelation of God was for the time completed; miracles were at an end, and prophecies were at an end: there was in their hands the volume of the Law and the Prophets, and in that written word alone were they to seek for the knowledge of God's will. At the same time they were taught to look forward to some future day when God

should again visit them in a more open manner, and should establish a state of things far better and more perfect than that which actually existed.

We see at once how exactly this corresponds with the condition in which we ourselves are placed now. With us, too, God's revelation is completed : miracles have ceased, and prophets are no more : we have the volume of the Law and the Prophets, with the more precious volume of the Gospel ; and from that alone can we learn anything of what God has done or will do for us, or of what He calls upon us to do for Him. And, to complete the exact likeness, we too are looking forward to that great day, when the heaven and earth shall be destroyed, and a new heaven and a new earth shall be created, in which there will be no more sorrow nor pain, but where righteousness and holiness shall dwell for ever. We are thus left in a state of trial similar to that in which the Jews were left between the prophesying of Malachi and the coming of Christ, that it may be seen whether we will use the means of grace which have been given to us, or no.

There is nothing which affords to my mind so convincing a proof of the truth of the Gospel promises and prophecies, as their exact agreement with what has been already confirmed by actual experience. In this way all that we know and remember of the changes through which we have already gone from childhood to manhood ; of the manner in which the character is formed ; of the clearness with which we perceive in our riper years many things which were quite beyond our comprehension when we were children ; of the vain regret which we feel for hours unprofitably wasted in our youth ; of our strong sense of the worthlessness of what we once most liked, and of the real importance and use of what then was only irksome and uninteresting ;—our recollection and consciousness of all these things is a most satisfactory warrant for our faith

with regard to those future changes in our condition, character, and notions of things, which the Scriptures tell us to expect hereafter. Now to take a similar instance connected with our present subject. When we read that the Jews were once placed for four hundred years in circumstances similar to those which we now see existing ; that they were left with no visible miracles or continued revelations, but merely with the Bible to guide and comfort them, and a promise of some better things to come hereafter ; and when we know that that promise was exactly fulfilled ; that a very great and happy change did take place by the coming of Christ, in which a far greater light was given, and a far more clear and certain, and therefore a more comfortable hope : we have every reason to believe that the promise of the better things to come hereafter, under which we are living, will be fulfilled with equal certainty ; that we are left for a while to walk by faith, and not by sight, and that he who shall endure unto the end shall find that this faith was reasonable.

The history of the Bible mentions further a third case similar to the two which I have noticed ; the state, namely, of the Jews, for another period of nearly three hundred years, from the death of Joshua to the beginning of the ministry of Samuel. Of this period also it is said expressly, that the ‘ word of the Lord was precious in those days, there was no open vision : ’ that is, there were no prophets or divine revelations, but men were left with the book of the Law alone to guide them ; and with those hopes,—faint and vague doubtless, yet still enough to give comfort to a thinking mind,—with those hopes of some future blessing yet to come of which the earlier prophecies recorded in the book of Genesis had obscurely spoken.

So then, after each of God’s revelations was given, there was a pause during which all further knowledge was forborne, in order that men might be proved whether they would



rightly use what they possessed already. There was a pause of more than three hundred years from Moses to Samuel; then followed a long period of successive revelations from the time of David to that of Malachi, in the course of which the Psalms and Prophets were added to the original revelation of the Law. After Malachi there ensued a longer pause of four hundred years, and then blazed forth the full light of the Gospel. The dispensation of the fulness of times required a longer period of trial; and accordingly, since the closing of the volume of the New Testament, there have elapsed nearly seventeen hundred and forty years; and we are still looking for the last revelation of all, when the Son of Man shall be revealed from heaven to make all things new.

Twice then already have the servants of God had their term of patient waiting; twice have they had to struggle with the temptations of the world, with no other weapons than the shield of faith, and the sword of the Spirit which is the word of God. And twice has experience shown that their faith and their struggles were not in vain; and that the Lord in whom they trusted was able and willing to save them to the uttermost. If our faith has been tried for a longer period than theirs, we must acknowledge that it is better furnished for the contest, that it ought to be better able to stand the trial. It is unreasonable to doubt Him whom we have twice known to redeem His promise already: and if we are longer waiting for its fulfilment, yet its language is more positive and clear than it ever was before, and the blessings to which it directs our hope are of a nature far more valuable.

It should ever be remembered, that when we speak of the comfort of God's promises, and of the grounds which past experience gives for believing in them, we suppose our hearers to be men of honest and thoughtful minds, who will take some pains in the matter, because they feel

some interest in it. The Bible affords, I think, very real and satisfactory encouragement to our faith, by the pictures which it presents of a similar state of things twice already existing, in which they who trusted in God were proved by the event to have been in the right. But when men will not take the trouble to study it, they throw away their own support; and it cannot then be wondered at if they feel the difficulties of their situation more strongly, and are less able to struggle against them. As the world now is, I am perfectly sure that it is the unbeliever and not the Christian who is *uninquiring* and *unreasonable*. Every one can see what are the temptations to unbelief: and it requires no great sagacity or freedom of thought to repeat the old question, ‘Where is the promise of Christ’s coming? For, since the fathers fell asleep, all things have continued as they were from the beginning of the world.’ It is perfectly easy to count up difficulty after difficulty: to ask, why we see no miracles now? why the prophecies are not clearer? and to talk of the number of people who have had their several superstitions in different times, which they believed as firmly as we do ours. So in worldly matters, I could start difficulties in abundance on almost every political question, or with respect to any plan that could be proposed in common life. And people get credit often for seeing more than their neighbours, when in fact they do not see beyond the mere surface; they just catch the difficulty, without either the patience or the understanding to point out how it may be removed. We hear every day a great variety of opinions on public matters; but who, except the most foolish and indolent of men, if called upon by his duty to take part in public life, would say that he knows not what to think about them, and that the subject is so difficult that he can think or do nothing either one way or the other? His language would rather be, that he must make out for himself on

which side the truth really lies; that a thing is not, therefore, really doubtful, because many unwise or thoughtless persons doubt about it; and that although many false opinions are commonly held, yet that proper pains and a desire to think and act right will for the most part enable us to avoid them. So it is also with our Christian faith. If we care little about it, and take no pains about it, it will seem full of difficulties; and we may learn to echo the language of unbelievers, that heathens have believed their religion as much as we do ours, and perhaps with as good reason. It is only by looking over the Scriptures carefully, by seeing how thoroughly they understand man's nature, and how exactly agreeable to our experience of the past is what they tell us of the future, that we can fully understand the real grounds of our own belief; and that the belief of the heathens was as foolish as unbelief would be in us.

Let us now think a little what was the state in which good men were placed among the Jews, from the days of Malachi to the coming of Christ. If they looked to those promises of worldly good things which had formed the greatest part of the law of Moses, they must have felt that they had little prospect of ever seeing them realised. They were restored from captivity, it was true,—their city and temple were rebuilt,—and they enjoyed their own laws and internal regulations. But their greatness as a people was gone by: they were subjects and tributaries to the kings of Persia; and far from possessing all the dominion which had belonged to David or Solomon, they retained only a narrow portion of the country in the immediate neighbourhood of Jerusalem. A few years later, and the Persian monarchy was overthrown, and the Jews became subject to the new Greek kingdom of Syria. After a desperate struggle they recovered their liberty, and maintained it for some years, till they again fell under

the more powerful control of the Romans. Meantime the internal state of Jerusalem was bad beyond all former example. The crimes of those men who one after another filled the high priest's office, and the general wickedness of the people, were quite enough to prevent them from expecting those blessings which had been promised as the reward of their faithful obedience. To what then could a good man look with hope in such a time of darkness? Outward signs of God's favour to His people were nowhere to be seen; their condition was in no respect better, and in some it was worse than that of the heathen nations around them. Had God then cast them off utterly, and was there nothing more to be hoped from trying to serve Him? Many of them did not scruple to say that it was so. 'It is vain to serve God; and what profit is it that we have kept his ordinance, and that we have walked mournfully before the Lord of Hosts?' It was natural that this language should daily become more common, as the worldly condition of the people became more disastrous. For those then who looked only on the surface of things, there was nothing that could support their faith. But the more thoughtful, and those who loved God better, sought to find whether there was not some ground of comfort yet left them. They turned over the volume of the Law and the Prophets; they found trust in God urged as a duty which would never be practised in vain; they saw a number of promises repeated from age to age, that God had in store for His servants some signal deliverance and blessing. The promises indeed were not so full or so clear as they might wish; doubts and difficulties beset them on every side; and it is impossible not to feel that their faith was tried most severely. So the greatest number fell away into unbelief, and only a few remained who still clung faithfully to their God. But for those few 'a book of remembrance was written before the Lord, and they shall

be mine, said the Lord of Hosts, in that day when I make up my jewels, and I will spare them as a man spareth his own son that serveth him. Then shall ye return and discern between the righteous and the wicked : between him that serveth God, and him that serveth him not.'

Even so will the Lord of Hosts remember as many of us as shall hold fast our faith steadfast to the end. Our fathers have had their temptations, we have ours, and others will attack our children after us. It is probable that they may be yet more formidable than ever they have been : a time is spoken of when 'the false Christs and false prophets shall show great signs and wonders, inso-much that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect.' Something of this, no doubt, occurred before the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans ; but whoever reads with attention the chapter which contains these words,<sup>1</sup> will see that the nearer and the more distant coming of Christ are throughout mixed up together ; and what applies only partially to the first, will be accomplished, according to the usual course of Scripture prophecy, more entirely at the last. But whatever be the nature of the times to come, the present has temptations enough ; and we have need of all our efforts, added to all our prayers, to struggle against them with success. He who looks for complete certainty, and the removal of every difficulty in the way of our belief in Christ, is confounding earth and heaven together. There we shall enjoy perfect knowledge, and our service will be one of untroubled love : but here we must walk by faith, not by sight, and the enemy of our souls will never cease his assaults against them.

Certainty, therefore, we must not expect to find ; we must after all live by faith ; that is, we must take much upon trust ; we must sow the seed in patience, believing

<sup>1</sup> Matt. xxiv.

that the harvest will come; we must abound in the work of the Lord, believing that our labour is not in vain in the Lord. All our practice in common life is founded upon belief, not upon certainty; we cannot be sure that a single plan we form will answer; we cannot be sure that a single step we take will lead to our good. But do we therefore sit still and do nothing? No; we are none of us so foolish in worldly matters; we act upon a probable prospect where we cannot have a certain one: we do that which is most likely to answer, after we have fully weighed risks on one side and on the other. And this which is worldly wisdom is heavenly wisdom also. Heaven and hell will not be opened before our eyes, God will not show Himself in a visible shape, nor will He make His thunder convey to us in articulate words the promise of eternal glory. So then we may believe or not as we choose; and herein lies our trial. We may act as we please, and take the consequences; nor can any say, till the day of judgment comes, that his decision has been proved the right one. But on the faith of their Master's word, Christ's servants are willing to abide the issue; they are satisfied that they have made the best choice, and determined, through the strength of their Lord, to go on boldly in the way on which they have begun, trusting that it will bring them at last to the haven where they would be.

## SERMON XXII.

*CHRISTIAN FELLOWSHIP A SUPPORT OF FAITH.*

MALACHI iii. 16.

*Then they that feared the Lord spake often one to another, and the Lord hearkened and heard it, and a book of remembrance was written before him for them that feared the Lord, and that thought upon his name.*

IN the preceding sermon upon these words, I wished to show how much we were placed in a situation similar to that of the Jews in the time of Malachi; and how much reason we had to be convinced of the truth of Christ's promise, that He would come again the second time to take His servants to Himself; when we saw that the promise of His first coming, which was the comfort of good men in the days of Malachi, has been already actually fulfilled. I said also, that we were tempted now to doubt of Christ's second coming, just as men then doubted of His first, because there were no visible signs of God's interference in the world, but all things seemed left to take their own natural course; and that as bad and thoughtless men disbelieved then, and do the same now; so good and thoughtful men clung still to their trust in God amidst all their difficulties, and had an especial promise that their faith, thus standing the fiery trial, should be recompensed with an exceeding great reward.

But there was one part of the text which I did not then dwell upon, because it seemed to call for more of our atten-

tion than could then have been afforded it, and was capable of being considered with more advantage by itself. I mean, that part in which the Prophet describes the method used by good men to confirm themselves in their faith. 'They that feared the Lord,' he says, 'spake often one to another.' It was their surest means, by God's grace, of resisting the temptations of their enemy, and so it is ours. It was the greatest earthly blessing of their lives, and so it is of ours. An earthly blessing indeed it ought scarcely to be called; for it reaches from earth to heaven. The Communion of Saints which is begun here will go on for ever and ever; only that whereas now, they who fear the Lord speak to one another of Him; hereafter He will Himself join their company, and they shall be one in Him and in the Father.

It has been well observed, that when Christ sent forth His seventy disciples during His own lifetime to preach the Gospel through the cities of Judah, He sent them forth two and two together. So again after His resurrection, the Apostles were seldom without a companion on their different journeys: Paul was accompanied either by Barnabas, or afterwards by Silas, or Timotheus, or Luke, so that he did not go forth alone. What the Apostles needed in their journeys as preachers of the Gospel, we need equally on our journey through life. The great object for which Christians were formed into a church or society, was that they might afford to one another a mutual comfort and support. But even where the feelings of Christian brotherhood were strongest towards the whole society of Christians, still there was room for individual friendships of a yet closer kind; where the comfort and support would be yet dearer and more effectual. Even where all loved all, yet particular resemblances of character, equality of station or age, and sameness of employments, would naturally draw one individual more to another than



to the rest of the society; they would know each other more fully and thus be able to give each other more effectual counsel when it was needed; they would have a pleasure in acting together which would keep alive their common desire of serving God. Here then there is a natural division of our subject; first, that we consider the support and comfort to be derived from our communion with the Church or society of Christians; and secondly the benefits of uniting ourselves closely with some one or more particular Christian friends.

But when I talk of the support and comfort to be derived from our communion with the Church or society of Christians, I may seem, perhaps, to be using idle words, without having in earnest any meaning in them. Such is our state, that the feeling of Christian union scarcely exists among us; the sense that we, as Christians, are members together of one common society, appears to be utterly lost. Who among those that hear me, ever enters this place with any different feelings from those with which he prays to God when alone? Who amongst us, when we go to the Lord's table, thinks of those who are kneeling beside him as companions and sharers with himself in the body and blood given and shed for us all? On any other occasions I might ask the question still more hopelessly. We meet as inhabitants of the same parish, as neighbours, or as friends. We have dealings with one another, as men of the same country, living under the same laws, and belonging to the same civil or political society. But any traces of common feeling as Christians, as belonging to that holy society of which Christ is the head, as being united with one another by having the same hopes and the same dangers, the same duties and the same interests, the same Master and the same Father,—any traces that we so feel towards one another, it would not, I fear, be easy to find. This is not the place to

inquire into the causes which have brought us to this state; it is enough that we should be reminded how totally different was the connection between Christians in old times, and that we should endeavour each of us, so far as we can, to correct in ourselves the tendency to feel as I have been describing.

There can be no doubt of the benefits which would arise to all classes of society from the habit of thinking upon those Christian interests which they all have in common. It would soften much of the unkindness, and arouse much of the neglect which now exists so commonly between a man and his neighbour: and most particularly it is the only thing which would place the intercourse between the rich and the poor on the footing most to be desired. As it is at present, even under the most favourable circumstances, they look upon one another in no other light than as the givers of alms on the one hand, and the objects for such charitable relief on the other. But we are so framed by nature, that it is not good for either party to have with the other only this kind of intercourse: it is not good for the rich to think of the poor only as objects of charity; it is not good for the poor to think of the rich only as of persons from whom they may expect to derive some worldly benefit. It is apt to make the one proud, and the other jealous; to make both dwell too strongly upon the worldly differences between them, and thus to feel removed to the greatest distance from one another. Whereas what we should wish them to feel is something of the very opposite nature, something of the same kind with that which is felt by two friends, one of whom is very superior in point of fortune to the other, and may thus have it in his power to do him great service; but still because they are friends, these services are offered without pride, and received without humiliation; they do not interfere with a sincere and equal attachment

mutually subsisting. Thus in some degree at least would the feeling of our connection as Christians operate upon us, were it not unhappily become almost entirely extinct.

The principal evils which have led to this state, and which have left us scarcely more than the name of a church remaining, it is not, I know, in the power of individuals to remove. But every one may do something towards it by cherishing in his own heart feelings of brotherhood to his fellow Christians as such; feelings distinct from those which he entertains towards them as his countrymen, or neighbours, or acquaintance. Of all distinctions, none can be so wide as that which separates a Christian from an unconverted man; an heir of heaven from a servant of the Devil. 'What concord has Christ with Belial?' was the natural question of the Apostle; 'or what part hath he that believeth with an infidel?' But let not this be misunderstood; for when he asks, 'What part hath he that believeth with an infidel?' he means, what have they in common that can make them look upon one another as intimate friends. Every man has a claim upon our kindness and assistance, and with every man we may and ought to entertain an intercourse of civility and charity. But when we speak of near and familiar intimacy, then every Christian ought to feel that between himself and a man of careless and worldly life there is a great gulph fixed: that their hopes and principles are different, that they are engaged for life and death in the service of two most opposite masters. On the other hand, every Christian ought to feel that between himself and a man who is also a Christian there is a natural connexion of the closest kind. How often do we see that similarity of tastes in some worldly matters brings two persons together, in spite of every difference of station, of manners, and even of general character. The agreement in one favourite point, to which both are especially de-

voted, outweighs all the points in which they are unlike. How much more then should this be the case, when the point of agreement is that one thing needful, in comparison with which every thing else fades into nothing!

Nor is it true, by any means, that Christians are so numerous that they cannot feel so particularly drawn together as those persons do who happen to agree in their fondness for some particular study or pursuit. When I speak of Christians, I mean those only who are Christians in reality: those only who are living by faith in the Son of God, and are renewed after the image of Him who created them. Surely it cannot be said that these are everywhere so common as to excite no particular interest or regard. If it were so, indeed, the world would be a very different sort of place from what it is. These true Christians are confined, it is true, to no one sect or party or outward communion: nor can anything be more opposite than a party or sectarian spirit, and a strong sense of that difference which subsists between Christ's servants and those who disobey and disregard Him. But taking all that we could collect, the number in each one's own neighbourhood is surely not so great as to weaken the peculiar regard which we should feel towards them: or to hinder us from looking upon them as on men who are fellow-soldiers together with ourselves amidst a multitude of careless spectators, or of open enemies.

Still, however, we must ever be more closely attached to some particular Christians than to others; and the number of every man's dear and intimate friends must of necessity be small. Yet it is to these that the words of the text especially apply: 'They that feared the Lord spake often one to another.' This should be true of the society of Christians in general: but it is, and ought to be, much more so of those who take sweet counsel together, and are bound to one another by the closest ties of personal

friendship. It can hardly be told how great is their loss who know not the comfort of Christian friends : in youth, more particularly, he who is without them loses the most powerful earthly instrument by which he is saved from temptation, and encouraged to good. Parents or teachers can do little in comparison : because the difference of age deprives what they say of much of its weight ; and destroys at the same time that equality which makes the influence of a friend so much less suspected, and listened to, therefore, so much more readily. Equality of age, and similarity in outward circumstances, draw men most closely to one another ; and, therefore, give them additional opportunities for becoming fully acquainted with each other's characters. Friends are sharers together in each other's amusements and pleasures : they are together in those hours of free and careless mirth, which the presence of persons of a different age would instantly check. At such times every one's experience can inform him how easily mirth may be turned into sin ; how easily the heart may be hardened, and the conscience dulled by the conversation and example of unchristian associates. Whereas Christian friends gain strength, and impart it to one another in the very midst of their temptations, and even of their falls. Growth in grace is ever gradual : and Christians in their youth are somewhat like the good men who lived in the earlier ages, or in what may be called the youth of the world : that is, their consciences are less enlightened than they become at a more advanced age ; they are less exalted in their notions of what they should not do, and of what Christ would love to find in them. There is much, therefore, in their lives that requires amendment : but, if they are Christians in earnest, they gradually lead one another on to higher views : a knowledge of their mutual faults makes them unreserved to each other ; they are not afraid of saying all that is in their hearts ; they make known to each other their particular difficulties and temptations ;

they feel that they are engaged in the same struggle ; and each is often able to give assistance to the other on one point, whilst in others he may himself require to be aided in his turn. So they go on from strength to strength, till they come together in maturer years to a more advanced state of Christian obedience : with natural faults repressed or subdued, with more enlarged views of the wisdom of God in Christ Jesus, and a more enlightened sense of the claims which God has upon the entire devotion of their hearts to his service.

‘Then they who feared the Lord spake often one to another ;’ for friendships such as I have described are not lightly broken ; and though in after life men may be far removed from one another, yet they either see each other from time to time, or have at least sufficient intercourse with one another, to preserve in full force their old feelings of union, to be ready to ask or to afford comfort and counsel in the concerns of each other’s souls, or to strengthen each other in their onward course by the mere interchange of Christian sentiments, and dwelling upon the things concerning the kingdom of God.

And the last thing I have named shows how important it is to our eternal interests that we should be provided with such Christian friends. I hold it to be most certain that few men, if any, can keep their hearts fixed as they ought to do on God and on Christ ; they cannot encourage as they should do the workings of the Holy Spirit within them, without sometimes speaking out of the abundance of their heart, and pouring forth to others the thoughts which most engross them. But such thoughts and such subjects form no part of the world’s common intercourse ; they cannot be addressed to every ear, nor will they meet with answering feelings in every bosom. Compelled as we so often are to become to them who are without the Law, almost as we ourselves were without the Law : obliged to hear so often in silence the expression of those low

unchristian principles which alone are on a level with the minds of worldly men; we should ourselves in time be tainted by the common infection, if we had no friend with whom we could converse as Christians, to whom we might speak without restraint our own natural language, and from whom we could receive an answer in a kindred spirit. Therefore, it is the interest, and if it be the interest in spiritual matters it is the duty, of every Christian, to endeavour to secure the blessing of a Christian friend. And one way to gain this is to have no intimate friendships with such as are not Christians; Christians, I mean, in earnest, and with all their hearts; for many a man who calls himself and is called by this name, is in reality an unbeliever: his faith goes no deeper than his lips. If we are known to be intimately associated with persons such as these, we shall be naturally suspected of resembling them: and good men will not come forward to seek the friendship of those who are the friends of the careless and unprincipled.

Finally, there are many persons whose nearest friends are already marked out for them. When men are become husbands and fathers, and still more when they are advanced in years, their nearest friendship must exist within their own households; they cannot go abroad to seek for them, if they have not been secured already. How miserable, then, must be our life if even in the midst of our nearest and dearest relations, we can enjoy no Christian communion; if even within our own house, we must serve our God alone! This is the curse of unchristian marriages, of being unequally yoked with unbelievers, and of neglecting the Christian education of our children. If such be our condition, how earnestly should we labour to hallow our earthly ties, by improving them into bonds of spiritual affection: to bring home those that are nearest and dearest to us to the knowledge of their Saviour, that as we are united to them in worldly concerns, we may not be strangers in the things which concern our everlasting peace.

## SERMON XXIII.

*INSINCERITY IN RELIGION.*

2 CORINTHIANS iv. 13.

*We having the same spirit of faith, (according as it is written, I believed, and therefore have I spoken;) we also believe and therefore speak.*

IN these words is contained a short and simple account of the feelings which urged the apostles to go about from one country to another, spreading the knowledge of Christ. ‘We believe,’ says St. Paul, ‘and therefore we speak.’ ‘We are men who have heard tidings wonderful and most interesting to us and to all mankind; we know too that they are not more wonderful than true; and, therefore, our hearts are hot within us, till we have repeated them to others, that they also may rejoice as we do. The secret or the mystery of God’s mercy through Christ is too great to be confined within our own bosoms: we should in vain strive to hide it; it would force its way to our lips, because it is always in our hearts; and out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh. Our words, therefore, are not forced, nor do we set ourselves to speak to Christ as a task or a business; it is the most natural subject on which our tongues can be employed; we believe, and we cannot help speaking of it.’

Such speaking, as was natural, did not fail to find many listeners. The people amongst whom the Apostles came,



saw plainly that they were in earnest about the matter ; that the tidings which they brought had really got possession of their minds, and that they only wished to make known to others what had been, and was every hour, so great a source of comfort to themselves. This impression of sincerity was all that was wanted ; for the Apostles had themselves eaten and drunken with our Lord after that He was raised from the dead, and therefore did not speak upon guess or uncertainty. They knew in whom they had believed, and thus their belief was as sure as it was earnest, and they might well speak according to it.

In a higher strain, yet somewhat to the same purpose, are the words of Christ himself. ‘The sheep hear the voice of the good shepherd, and he calleth his own sheep by name and leadeth them out ; and when he putteth forth his own sheep, he goeth before them, and the sheep follow him, for they know his voice ; and a stranger will they not follow, but will flee from him, for they know not the voice of strangers.’ ‘I am the good Shepherd, and know my sheep, and am known of mine. As the Father knoweth me, even so know I the Father, and I lay down my life for the sheep.’ The good shepherd is listened to and followed, because he loves his sheep, and is even ready to lay down his life for them ; but a stranger is not followed, because he is an hireling, and careth not for the sheep ; and, therefore, when he seeth the wolf coming, he leaveth the sheep and fleeth. If we are spoken to for our own sakes, we are certainly more disposed to listen to the speaker ; but if we think that he is but speaking for some ends of his own, and does not greatly care about what he is saying, we are apt to turn away from him with suspicion and indifference.

Undoubtedly what has here been said applies to Christian ministers in a particular manner ; and offers the

best explanation why so much of their preaching has remained without effect. Few, it is to be hoped, have been so wicked as to preach to others what they themselves believed to be a lie ; but many thousands have spoken of that in which they have no lively or strong belief, and have spoken therefore tamely and unprofitably. They have spoken because it was their business to speak, just as a lawyer repeats what he finds put down in his brief, and argues upon it to the best of his skill, in order to acquire a reputation in his profession. And such speaking may indeed persuade, when the persuasion costs us nothing ; it may move a juryman to give his verdict, because he himself is not personally affected by the nature of that verdict : but when the business is to persuade a man to make great sacrifices, to give up his favourite passions, to deny himself, and to change his nature from bad to holy ; then it is needful that the speaker should be himself thoroughly in earnest ; that he should himself be deeply convinced of the importance of what he is recommending ; that he is inviting others to take his medicine because he has tried it and found it of service to himself. A stranger, indeed, may produce great effect by his preaching, although he be not thus entirely sincere, because we may in charity, as we know nothing to the contrary, presume that his life and heart agree with his words ; but where a man is known, nothing will answer but a holy life ; no preaching will win souls but that which is seen manifestly to come forth from him naturally ; that he believes, and therefore he speaks. And the consideration of this truth should be ever present to the minds of all who are ministers, or who look forward to becoming so hereafter ; lest they should vainly think to make up by talents and learning for the want of a sanctified spirit, and thus lose the souls of their hearers, and bring down a double measure of condemnation on their own.

All, however, are neither ministers, nor likely to become

such; and it cannot be for the edification of any one to tell him only what concerns another. But many who are not ministers are teachers, many more are parents or masters; and almost all are likely at one time or other of their lives to fill either these relations, or some other in which they will wish to influence the conduct of others. To all these, then, the words of the text afford a perpetual lesson; let them believe, and so let them speak: or if they do not, they may be sure that their words will ever be spoken in vain.

Now I wish it to be understood that when I say, 'Let them believe, before they speak,' I mean to use the word 'believe' in the same sense that the Apostle does, and in fact in which the Scripture generally uses it. He has no notion of that cold, that languid, that sleeping acquiescence in the truth of the Gospel message, which some men choose to call 'Belief.' He supposes that if a man really believed that he would find a treasure hidden in his field, he would arise and look for it without delay; and if he saw him taking no steps to get it, he would certainly conclude that his belief in the reality of its existence was not very sincere, or at any rate that it was not very strong. In the same way, those persons are called unbelievers in Scripture, who, having heard the great tidings of salvation, are not actively aroused by them, whether they declare that they believe them or no. And in this sense, there are thousands of unbelievers to be met with; and the evil fruits which are seen so often in the lives of children, whose parents are what is called respectable people, prove but too clearly the evil root of unbelief from which they have arisen.

I am not speaking, then, of those who are professed unbelievers; they are in comparison few; nor yet of those who, although they do not openly profess their unbelief, are yet at no great pains to conceal it; and whom all

who know them would at once call irreligious. But I am speaking of those who say that they do believe, but deceive themselves in saying so ; for their belief is always overpowered by believing in something else more strongly, so that in point of fact it is nothing. These persons wish to bring up their children well, to have them taught to read their Bible, to say their prayers, to learn their catechism ; they would be shocked to see them reading a profane book, or using any profane language. If then in after life their children disappoint all their hopes, they are apt almost to borrow the words of God to his people, and say, ‘ What could have been done more to my vineyard, that I had not done in it ? Wherefore, when I looked that it should bring forth grapes, brought it forth wild grapes ? ’

But this disappointment is indeed their own fault : they spoke to their children as men who believed not what they were saying : and their children did not believe it either. They taught them to read the Bible, in which such language as this is for ever occurring, ‘ If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily and follow me.’ ‘ Take no thought what ye shall eat or what ye shall drink ; Lay not up for yourselves treasures on earth, but in heaven ; Love not the world, nor the things which are in the world ; if any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him. He that exalteth himself shall be abased ; Blessed are the poor in spirit ; Blessed are the meek. Resist not evil. Why do ye not rather take wrong, and suffer yourselves to be defrauded, than go to law one with another ? ’ and to conclude, ‘ If any man is in Christ he is a new creature.’ They taught their children, I say, to read the Book which contains all these things, and told them that it was the word of God ; and yet their children heard them talking, and saw them acting continually, as if there were no

such book in the world. They heard them talking and saw them acting, as if a good provision in this world were the first and great object ; as if worldly praise were above all things to be courted, and worldly disgrace above all things to be dreaded ; as if a meek and peaceable spirit were rather a misfortune ; and one that would always insist upon having its own were a great blessing : as if the heart of man by nature, instead of being corrupt and deceitful, were amiable and innocent, and did not require to be new made by a long and a most watchful discipline. Again, they find the Scriptures describing the state of a Christian as a perpetual warfare, in which he must watch and pray always, lest he should be overcome ; but they see their parents leading a life of evident thoughtlessness as to this grand concern of all : so that whatever pursuit it be which interests them most, it is certainly not the pursuit of heaven ; their hearts and thoughts are all on earth. This becomes more striking when it is compared with the real earnestness displayed by the same parents on those points which concern their children's earthly welfare. With what kind and anxious care do they regard them when their health is delicate ; how careful are they that they shall do nothing imprudent, and that no sacrifice may be spared of money or of trouble that may do them good. Or again, with respect to their worldly studies, or to whatever may fit them for their profession or situation in after life ; how grieved are they if they see any want of attention in their children, how earnestly do they excite their industry ; nay, how often do they rouse in them, without scruple, feelings of emulation and ambition ! And this they do, not on the right ground,—namely, that whoever neglects the duties of his particular calling, or age, or station, is leading a life of sin, and cannot be therefore in a state of salvation : but simply because such conduct is hurtful to their children's prospects in life : and they would many times start with

surprise to hear the faults which they are regretting and reproving treated as they ought to be ; that is, as sins against God.

Again, what is it that leads to so many unhappy marriages, but the unchristian views with which parents too often look to what they call the settlement of their children : that is, in plain words, their eagerness to see them married to a rich partner, or to one who possesses good connections. They would on no account approve of a marriage with a person of bad character, that is, who has done something so bad that even the world sets its mark upon him, as being worse than people in general ; for that is what I understand by a bad character. But who does not know that the husband or wife of a Christian should be better than people in general ; that they should be amongst the few who are striving to enter in at the strait gate : not amongst the many who are going on the broad road to destruction ? It is because parents do not teach their children to look out for such partners : nor to consider marriage as merely the agreement of two travellers towards heaven, to keep each other company on the journey, to lighten its labours, and to prevent each other from fainting on their road, or going astray from it, that people so often marry as it is called happily and respectably, and find themselves engaged with a partner who has no notion of the true end of life ; and whose worldly principles and worldly passions either embitter their time here, or, corrupting them by evil example, ruin them for all eternity.

Or with masters and servants : do they speak because they have believed, who desire their servants to go to church, and advise them to read their Bibles, while they themselves stay at home, and read any thing rather than the Bible ? who have prayers in their families at morning or evening, when the day is spent in mere idle amuse-

ments ; and their life bears no mark of their having any of their thoughts and affections fixed on that which the words of their prayers describe as the greatest blessing ? They talk sometimes of sending their servants to church for the sake of example ;—an example of what ? except of their own,—I do not say hypocrisy,—but of their shameless mockery of God, and cheating of men ? And sometimes they go to church themselves for example too ! Well may Christ say of such as He did of Judas ; ‘the hand of him that betrayeth me is with me on the table.’ They are indeed spots in our meetings of piety and charity, who have neither part nor portion there ; and who by their coming into the assembly of Christians are only self-condemned, as thereby declaring themselves that they ought to be Christians, while they are the slaves of sin and the world.

How different is their case,—how different both for themselves and for others, theirs, who believe and therefore speak ; who being themselves full of communion with God, reflect upon all around them the brightness which they have received from the light of the Spirit of Christ ! Whether they speak to children, or to servants, or to friends, or to whomsoever it may be, their words come with all the weight of experience ; they warn against temptations which they have themselves encountered ; against sins which they have themselves abhorred ; of blessings which they themselves are tasting. They will not be in danger of dwelling too much upon things of little consequence, and of neglecting what is of the greatest value : their speaking is not that of a man who has got his lesson by rote, and because he neither understands nor feels it, is apt to make continual mistakes ; it is that of him who indeed speaks out of the abundance of his heart ; and whose words for that very reason are most likely to strike home to the hearts of others. That even such men indeed should be

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always listened to, is more than we ought to hope ; for how many heard even Christ Himself in vain ? yet as in the natural world, though the seed does not always ripen, yet it does so commonly, and it is the course of things that it should do so : so they who believe and therefore speak, they who might say with the Psalmist, ‘ O come hither and hearken, all ye that fear God, and I will tell you what he hath done for my soul,’—they mostly find that their labours are not without fruit ; and that the children who owe to them their earthly being, are guided also by their care to the gate of life everlasting, their children in the Gospel, no less than according to the flesh.



## SERMON XXIV

*THE WORDS OF CHRIST.*

ST. JOHN vi. 53.

*Then Jesus said unto them, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of Man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you.*

I HAVE been often struck, in reading different notes or commentaries upon the Scriptures, with the pains which the writers seem to take to lessen the force of many of our Lord's speeches, by explaining them in vague and general language. Now this is in fact to undo Christ's work. He who best knew what manner of speaking would most reach the heart and the understanding of men, chose on all occasions a style the most lively, distinct, and forcible, that is anywhere to be found. It takes hold of the attention by its novelty and beauty; and by its strength and clearness comes home at once to the mind of every one, how different soever the education of each may have been. In trying to explain it, we too often either darken it or weaken it; we deprive it of that peculiar charm, of that especial power of reaching the soul, for which Christ chose to use it; we lower His words and teaching from the teaching of one having authority to that of the Scribes.

There is an old story told of St. John, that towards the close of his life his addresses to his hearers were nothing more than a repetition of the words, 'Children, love one

another:' and that when he was asked why he was always saying the same thing, he answered, because that one thing contained every thing. So there are many speeches of our Lord, to repeat which over and over again in their own simple words would be better than all the sermons which the wit of man could devise—speeches which require no explanation, and which, if in any degree altered, only lose something of their power. Such are those divine lessons, 'What shall it profit a man, if he should gain the whole world and lose his own soul? Or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?' 'Strive to enter in at the strait gate; for strait is the gate and narrow is the way which leadeth unto life, and few there be which go in thereat; because wide is the gate and broad is the way that leadeth to destruction; and many there be which go in thereat.' 'The hour cometh when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth; for the Father seeketh such to worship him. God is a spirit, and they who worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth.' 'Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest; take my yoke upon you, and learn of me, for I am meek and lowly of heart, and ye shall find rest to your souls; for my yoke is easy and my burden is light.'

These and many more such passages can never be heard or read too often; they should be sounding for ever in our ears, till they are exchanged for the song of the angels before the throne of God and of the Lamb; and he who would be weary of the one would assuredly find no pleasure in the other. Christ's words must be our daily food, if we are willing that our souls should live. Or do we think that our bodies would be weak and unable to do their work if kept for less than one day without their nourishment, but that our souls shall feel no hurt, if they are left, as is too often the case, for six days together without theirs? 'Give

us this day our daily bread,' is a prayer which our souls need full as much as our bodies. Give us the bread of life; give us our best and most necessary food, without which we cannot live. Of a truth, except we do eat of this food, except our souls have their daily hunger and thirst supplied with the bread and water of life, or by those holier refreshments of the Christian wilderness,—except we 'eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood,' there is, there can be, no life in us.

I have thus brought you to the words of the text, to show how little they require any explanation when taken in connection with what goes before them, and how poorly any thing that we might put in their stead would come up to their force and liveliness. And now what shall we say to the cavil of the unbelieving Jews, 'How can this man give us his flesh to eat?' Can we think that this was said in real ignorance; that among all Christ's hearers there was any one so grossly stupid as really to believe that Christ meant him to eat His flesh, and to drink His blood? Even amongst us, who are so much less used to such a lively and figurative way of speaking, I am satisfied that no man could so misunderstand the words: what would be the case then among the Jews, to whom parables and comparisons were a part of the national mode of instruction, and whose own Scriptures were full of similar phrases, likening the refreshment of the soul to the meat or drink of the body? Doubtless it was a difficulty which they made, and not one which they found; they were inclined beforehand to find fault with all that He said, because He, the carpenter's son, whose father and mother they knew, had told them that He had come down from heaven. So there are many amongst us who, although, as I hope and believe, far less blameably and far less fatally, do yet make to themselves difficulties in the language of our Lord, which plain, simple, and sincere men, without much learning, reading the Bible honestly as their rule of life, are not at all

puzzled with. 'The truth is, we are afraid of the strength of our Lord's words; we do not like to take them in their full and plain meaning; and then we pretend that they are difficult, and take care so to explain them as to deprive them of that force and strictness which had alarmed us. But let us take for example the words of the text, and by seeing the different ways in which they have been misinterpreted, let us learn by God's grace to hold fast the lessons of our Lord in all their original freshness and piercing power.

First, then, there was the error of those who understood, or rather pretended to understand, our Lord's words according to the very letter; who said, How can this man give us his flesh to eat? It would have been such utter foolishness so to have understood Him, that we cannot suppose, as I have said, that any one could really have been so ignorant. At any rate, we know that our Lord expressed Himself in the strongest terms against such a misrepresentation: 'It is the spirit that quickeneth,' said He; 'the flesh profiteth nothing; the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit and they are life.' As if He had said, How can ye think of eating my flesh, as if any bodily food could be of any service to your souls? It is a spiritual food that you need, and that not my flesh but my words can alone give you. 'The words that I speak unto you, they are spirit and they are life.' It is remarkable, therefore, that with these very words of our Lord on record, the Roman Catholic Church should still understand, or pretend to understand, according to the letter, another speech of His almost exactly similar to this; that when giving the bread and wine to His Disciples, and saying, 'This is my body,' and 'This is my blood,' anyone should be so foolish as to think that He meant that fleshly food which He Himself had declared could profit them nothing.

But there are many other of Christ's sayings which,

taken in the letter, become equally unprofitable. When washing His Disciples' feet, and telling them, that if He their Lord and Master had washed their feet, so ought they to wash one another's feet, a mere literal fulfilment of the command would become a useless and absurd form, which could never profit the soul of any man. So again, when He told them, 'If any man strike you on the one cheek, turn to him the other also;' 'If any man will take thy cloak, let him have thy coat also;' 'If any man should compel thee to go a mile, go with him twain;' he who were to understand these words to the letter, would be almost as absurd as he who should think that Christ intended to feed His disciples with His own flesh and blood. Nay, there are some sayings of Christ, which to obey to the letter would be actually sinful. When He tells us, that 'If any man come to him, and hate not his father and his mother, he cannot be his disciple:' we know that whoso really hates his father and mother whom he has seen, can certainly not love Christ whom he has not seen; and we know also, that it must be the greatest wickedness to hate those whom we are most bound to love and honour. We see, therefore, that to follow the letter of our Lord's words on many occasions, would either profit us nothing, or would absolutely be mischievous to us.

Theirs, however, is a more common error, who, not content with not following the letter of the commandment, lower and weaken its spirit also; and thus set up for themselves a different and less perfect rule of life than that which God has given us. Persons of this sort would explain the words of the text by saying, Except ye keep the commandments of Jesus Christ, you cannot be saved. Now this doubtless is very true; but it is not exactly the whole truth of Christ's expression; to keep the commandments of Jesus, does not quite come up to the force of His own lively words, that we must eat His flesh and drink His

blood. Those words express that He must be to our souls what daily food is to our bodies; that we must live upon Him, that we must be ever walking by faith in Him; that we must look up to Him habitually in all our temptations, distresses, and perplexities, as to our only deliverer, comforter, and guide: that we must be in communion with Him as members with their head; and this day by day, and always; for without Him we can do nothing; and our souls will sicken, and fall away from their sound health, if they are kept even a day without that nourishment which turning to Him in prayer and in constant meditation can alone supply them with.

Again, the strong commands, ‘If any man strike you on the one cheek, turn to him the other also;’ ‘Sell what ye have, and give alms;’ ‘Take no thought for your life, what you shall eat or what you shall drink;’ they are a constant lesson to us that we are never meek enough, never charitable enough; never spiritual-minded enough. We try to improve ourselves in all these points, and we do well: but have we done enough? are we as perfect in them as Christ requires? No, not yet; we must go on, still growing in these graces, still forgetting the things that are behind, and pressing forward to what is before. For what does Christ say? Is it a little progress which will content Him? No; He tells us that we can never go far enough, by putting His command at the very highest point beyond what we can ever attain to. He means to hinder us from ever sitting down with a feeling of self-satisfaction, as if we had gone as far as we ought. ‘All these commandments have I kept from my youth up,’ said the young man to Him, when speaking of the ten commandments of Moses; ‘what lack I yet?’ ‘If thou wilt be perfect, sell all that thou hast and give to the poor, was the answer, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven; and take up the cross and follow me.’ So if we

ask, What lack we yet in meekness? Christ answers, 'If any man smite thee on the one cheek, turn to him the other also.' If we ask, Have we not done as much for the poor as Christ requires? He replies, 'Sell that thou hast and give alms.' If we say, Are we not free enough from worldly anxieties? Christ tells us, 'Take no thought for the morrow.' No other words could have expressed so forcibly to what a perfection in all these several graces we should ever be labouring to attain: they are the very graces which are most opposite to our corrupt nature, and wisely and mercifully has our Lord provided that we should never cease in our endeavours to improve in them; for if we did, we should most certainly go backwards, and lose even the ground which we had already gained.

In interpreting then, generally, the language of our Lord, we must take care on the one hand not to follow the letter, but the spirit of it; and on the other hand, not to lower its spirit, nor make the meaning less forcible than it is as it stands in the Scriptures. I have applied this rule to the words of the text; and shown that as it would be mere folly to suppose that Christ meant us to eat His flesh and blood, so it is not doing full justice to His meaning if we lose sight of this main truth, that He is indeed to be the food of our souls; their daily, and their main support, without whose nourishment they cannot live in health.

I will give one other instance. Christ says, that in hell 'the worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched;' and again, that 'to him that overcometh, he will give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the Paradise of God.' Now we do not suppose that there is really a worm in hell to gnaw men's flesh, nor that there is really a tree in heaven from which the good will gather fruit to eat. But if not a worm, there is a suffering of body and soul, which indeed shall never end;

if there is not a tree of life in the midst of heaven, yet we know that He is not the God of the dead but of the living, for all live unto Him ; that in His presence is the fulness of joy, and at His right hand there is pleasure for evermore.

Some, I believe, have been inclined to lower the meaning of such expressions as those in the text, because they think that they may encourage extravagance and fanaticism. But we should all bear in mind that man, it is true, is apt to abuse even the best things ; but there are two ways of abusing them ; one by over using them, and the other by not using them enough. Many persons, it is likely, have attached some fanciful notion to the words, eating the flesh of Christ and drinking His blood ; and have let their thoughts and their tongues run wild, without bringing their hearts and lives to a sober and faithful obedience. But many, and perhaps more, by forgetting the force and peculiar meaning of the command to make Christ our food, and by putting always in the place of such lively expressions the mere injunction to obey Christ's law, have in fact grown cold in their feelings towards Him, have lost the sense of their close relationship to Him, have not held fast to Him as their head, nor have sought of Him daily their spiritual nourishment and strength. They have not then eaten the flesh of the Son of Man, nor drunk His blood : they have lived much in the world without Him ; and their life, therefore, has not been that life of faith in the Son of God, which it ought to be. It is unwise in us now to use the same sort of figurative language in religious subjects, unless we merely borrow and quote Christ's own words ; because it is not natural to our national character or habits, and therefore appears to be affectation, even if it really is not so. But we must not lose our relish for it when we meet with it in the Scriptures : there it is in its place, natural and proper ; and



more powerful and edifying than anything which we can put in its room. In fact, the more fondly we love the words of Christ, so much the better hope is there that we shall practise them. There was an especial promise given, that the Holy Ghost should bring them faithfully to the remembrance of His apostles; in order that they might record them without the possibility of corrupting them; and the more we study and feed upon them, the more reason shall we see to bless the goodness of God for preserving them to us so surely. And, it is a further blessing, that they are their own best interpreter; so that he who has the Scriptures only, and reads them humbly, sincerely, and with the exercise of his thought and understanding, will find for the most part that they are clear enough for any practical improvement, and become clearer and more effective for that purpose every time they are read with an honest heart and an humble spirit.

## SERMON XXV

## TRIBULATION.

ACTS xiv. 22.

*We must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God.*

It needs but a very little knowledge of the history of the first Christians to perceive the truth of these words, at the time when they were spoken and written. Undoubtedly, the Christians of those days were exposed to abundant tribulations, from the Jews, from the Heathens, from the mere violence of the common people, and more constantly than all these, from the separation in families, and the tearing away old friendships and connexions which followed their conversion to their new faith. I do not know that this last trouble has been so much noticed in after ages as it deserves, although our Lord Himself had foretold it as one of the severest trials which His Disciples should meet with. ‘A man’s foes shall be they of his own household.’ ‘I am come,’ said He, ‘to set a man at variance against his father, and the daughter against her mother.’ ‘From henceforth there shall be five in one house divided, three against two, and two against three.’ The pain which Christians were obliged to give to those whom they best loved, and who in many respects most deserved their love; the disappointing their hopes, the shocking their feelings and opinions, must have been more grievous to bear than

the pains of martyrdom, and often must they have found it needful to strengthen their resolutions by recurring to Christ's own warning ; 'He who loveth father or mother more than me, is not worthy of me ; and he that loveth son or daughter more than me, is not worthy of me.'

Of the peculiar tribulations which beset the first Christians, many, as we know, are no longer felt by us. We have nothing to fear from the enmity of Jewish or Heathen governments, or from the violence of the populace, if we follow Christ both in name and in deed. Nor does the profession of the Gospel in ordinary cases breed quarrels amongst the members of the same family. All call themselves Christians, and, therefore, no one individual is likely to give pain or offence by doing so. Yet it may not be amiss to consider, whether the words of the text are not in some sense applicable to us now ; whether there are not some particular tribulations which we all should expect to meet with in our Christian course, over and above these common trials which await us all, not as Christians but as men.

I think that there are some such tribulations, and that they may be generally divided into two kinds ; those which we meet with from being obliged to run counter to the opinions and feelings of other men, and those which we become exposed to from the increased tenderness of our consciences, and the greater liveliness of our hopes and fears, as we are more impressed with the spirit of the Gospel, and learn more eagerly to desire the promises of God, and to dread His judgments.

To begin then with those tribulations to which we may be exposed from being obliged to run counter to the opinions and feelings of other men. It is clear to every one who thinks about it, that these are infinitely different, according to the different kinds of society into which we may happen to be thrown. Some are so happy in being

brought up amongst those who are Christians in earnest, and by falling into the society of Christian friends on their first entrance into life, that their principles and practice are strengthened under this sort of shelter, and are free from any inconsistencies, or anything that may make them suspected of hypocrisy. Such persons, when they mix in the world, are understood and allowed to be Christians in earnest; and then it is generally found that their conduct excites much more of respect than of persecution. One must set aside all dislike or vexation which they may bring upon themselves from want of judgment or knowledge of the world; from anything in short which we may call a deficiency in that 'wisdom of the serpent,' recommended by Christ to be united with the harmlessness of the dove. If a good man through ignorance or bad taste does his duty unamiably, or with too little regard to the prejudices of others; any dislike or annoyance which he may in such a case meet with, ought not to be classed among those tribulations through which our way to the kingdom of God necessarily leads us. Still more may this be said, if a good man is at the same time rough or severe in his temper, or even if his manners be particularly gloomy and forbidding. Whatever tribulations he may incur on these accounts are not to be considered as part of the cross of Christ: but rather as the natural consequence of something faulty in himself; I do not say, so faulty as to justify the treatment which it receives; but yet such as he ought according to his Christian duty to labour to get the better of.

I am inclined, therefore, to think that the troubles and difficulties which befall a man because he strives to serve Christ, and not on account of any faults or ignorance which may be mixed up with His service, fall in our days chiefly upon two classes of persons; the poor, and amongst the richer classes not so much those who are entered into life, but those whose character is forming; persons, in short, who

have not yet arrived at the age of manhood. It would be very easy to show why this is so ; and how much the condition of the poor in point of morals resembles that of young persons among the rich ; but, without going into this subject, as I believe the fact itself is sufficiently clear from experience, I will rather endeavour to show what should be the conduct of those who, from their age or situation, are most exposed to this trial.

In the first place, as I said before, it is most important that he who enters upon the service of Christ should resolve by God's grace to do so thoroughly. Let him, if he will, sit down first and count the cost, but if he has begun his tower let him resolve to finish it. I speak not now of our Lord's express declaration, that we must forsake all that we have in order to be His disciples ; that is, that we must resolve to obey Him and to follow Him in all things without exception ; not in those only where we have no peculiar temptation to disobey Him. But with regard to the mere vexations and evil reports of men, it is a double-minded conduct which most exposes us to them, inasmuch as if we are not consistent, we are directly suspected, or at any rate men pretend to suspect us, of hypocrisy. For example, a man might be laughed at or evil spoken of for keeping out of riotous company ; but he would certainly be so, if while he shunned drinking, or loose conversation, he was known to be dishonest, or to behave ill to his wife and family. So with regard to quarrels amongst young men : a man's refusal to fight might naturally be looked upon as a mere pretence of cowardice, if he were known at the same time to keep no guard over his tongue, or to indulge in any of those fleshly lusts which war against the soul. These are tribulations which men make, or at least greatly increase for themselves, by their own evil deeds ; and they give a very awful lesson of the way in which sin tends to strengthen itself, by making the practice of any one good

thing doubly difficult: till at last men, finding that they are thwarted and reviled for attempting to be good in some points, whilst they are bad in others, are apt to avoid this tribulation by being bad in all alike.

As consistency in goodness is one great method of avoiding tribulation for running counter to the opinions of those around us; so it is of great importance in this point of view also, as in every other, that we should begin to come early to Christ. What we have done from our early years, we seem to do naturally, without any affectation or display. It is the novice, he who is newly converted, who is most apt to be puffed up, to think much of every duty which he performs, and almost to court reproach by his forwardness. Whereas he who has gone on from strength to strength, thinks nothing of his own acting right, because he has been always accustomed to do so: he does it simply and naturally, and therefore also consistently: goodness seems to become him, and even those who are farthest from imitating him, are yet content that he should follow his way as they do theirs. So that here also is an immense encouragement to train our children early in the paths of Christ; as, besides all higher reasons, every step in the right way which they take now, will greatly smoothe the difficulties of their course in youth and manhood.

But I must not avoid coming more closely to the point. All persons are not brought to Christ early; all are not consistent in their lives, not from want of a sincere resolution, but from the weakness of our nature yielding to temptation in those matters where sin is most inviting to us. We have then a person of a very mixed life; not better, in the common phrase, than the rest of his neighbours, with no right, therefore, according to their notions, to pretend to greater strictness than they; yet we find him desirous of serving Christ, but dreading the opposition and the difficulties which his own very faults have raised

in his way against him. Such a person will say, ‘ I cannot pretend to hold a higher tone than others, for my life does not warrant it : I shall be certainly accused of hypocrisy, and I fear I have given too much reason for the charge. I must not, I cannot set up for a serious person, and therefore have no choice but to follow the common opinions and conduct of the world.’

This is no uncommon case ; but one which every man must in his own experience, in the earlier part of his life, have often met with. And unless we forget our own feelings and condition when we were young ourselves, we must allow it to be a very painful one. Young persons are placed so much more in constant contact with their companions, and our opinions and feelings towards one another, at that age, are expressed so much more bluntly and rudely than in after life, that there is absolutely more to suffer by going against the opinion of the society around us, at the same time that there is less strength of character to withstand the trial. I do not know that there are any circumstances in our common life, in this age and country, in which the turning to Christ in sincerity is more difficult. To disguise the difficulties, or to make light of them, is neither honest nor wise ; but allowing them in their full force, and feeling most sincerely for those who are exposed to them, still we must not disguise the truth on the other side ; that this is the very taking up the cross to which Christ calls us ; that this is one of those appointed tribulations from which, if we turn away, we cannot enter into the kingdom of God.

And for the reproach of hypocrisy which is feared by such persons as I have been speaking of, because their lives are not consistently good, let them indeed fear it, if it is well founded ; that is, if they do not wish to serve God always, and with all their hearts, but only when it may be convenient to them to do so. This is hypocrisy, certainly ;

this is to be double-minded ; and to such, indeed, Christ offers no encouragement ; and His apostle James truly says, ‘ Let not that man think that he shall receive any thing of the Lord.’ But if they do wish to be whole with Christ, but fear to be charged as hypocrites because they do not always serve Him in their practice ; then this fear might hinder every man living from turning to God ; for not the holiest man is without sin ; and if the practice of sin makes our good deeds hypocrisy, then the best of the Apostles, the noblest of the martyrs, were all hypocrites.

It is said, however, that they do not expect to be without sin altogether, but with sin less prevailing in them ; that it seems hypocrisy to profess higher principles than other people, and yet not to lead a better life. But the point to be considered is, not whether it seems hypocrisy or no, but whether it is so. If I confess and feel with shame how far my life falls short of what it ought to be, and if I am resolved, with God’s grace, to make it more like the holy law of Christ, then I *am* no hypocrite, however much I may be thought so by those who make too little allowance for the strength of sin, and the long struggles which it will maintain even after we have commenced in earnest to strive against it ; or however much I may be called so, by those who hate the profession of goodness only less than they hate goodness itself, and wish therefore by every means to deter others from owning their wish to follow Christ. It comes then to this—shall I never try to be good, because I am not yet as good as I wish to be ? Shall I, for fear of being called a hypocrite untruly, become a hypocrite in reality, and a hypocrite of the very worst kind ; that is, one who, whilst he really does believe, and sometimes believes and trembles too, pretends, as far as he can, that he neither cares for nor acknowledges the authority of his Saviour’s law ?



It then only remains, that at whatever time of life we are impressed with a sense of the urgency of Christ's call to us, we should resolve and labour, and pray earnestly, that we may obey that call without reserve. I would say indeed to any one, but most of all to a young person under these circumstances, 'Walk in wisdom towards those who are without.' Give no needless offence by insisting upon little things, by using any peculiar style in talking or writing, above all, by condemning or judging harshly of others. Be in earnest indeed; but be so quiet and soberly: 'if we are beside ourselves,' says St. Paul, 'it is to God; if we are sober, it is for your sakes.' If you feel strongly and intensely,—as who can help feeling when he considers things so great as Christ's infinite love, and his own infinite happiness on the one hand, or infinite misery on the other?—yet indulge these strong sensations before God and yourself only; let them burn within your heart, but not blaze abroad out of it; for the sake of others, be sober in your dealings with others; that is, be an amiable man and a reasonable man, adding to these that more excellent way, which gives value and life to all the rest,—be a holy and a spiritual man besides. Do not believe those who tell you that this is to be ashamed of Christ, and to conform yourself to the world. To be cold and heartless, to be content with a little growth in godliness; to take up, not the reasonable part of worldly things, but any the smallest portion of low worldly maxims of life; that indeed were to be halting between Christ and the world. But the Spirit of God is not a spirit of foolishness, nor of ignorance, nor of scrupulousness, nor least of all, a spirit of uncharitableness; it is a spirit of wisdom, and a spirit of knowledge, and a spirit of liberty: above all, it is a spirit of love, for God is love.

I spoke also of another sort of tribulations, through which we must enter into the kingdom of God: I mean

those more acute feelings of hope and fear, and of anxiety about our conduct, which arise from our being more deeply impressed with the spirit of the Gospel. Some persons are inclined to set all feelings of this kind to the account of bodily constitution : and there is no doubt that those who are weak and delicate do feel them much more keenly. But there is more in them than this, and naturally so. Strong men are often deeply affected by being placed in situations of intense interest in worldly matters, where great consequences depend on their conduct, and the reputation of their lives is on the issue. Now to him who believes the Gospel, his whole life is a situation, I do not say of such interest, but of interest infinitely greater ; a situation in which his everlasting happiness or misery depends upon his conduct, and may be affected by the state of his heart and practice every hour. True it is that habit, and perhaps very often some portion of unbelief, keeps this out of our thoughts very commonly ; but who can wonder that it should sometimes rush upon them, and that the effect should be then enough to stagger the firmest mind, and confound the wisest ? Perhaps it is a most merciful dispensation that it should be so ; the feeling of our own littleness and weakness, which in unbelievers leads only to a careless, scoffing, desperate bitterness, is in a Christian that valley of humiliation through which the way to the celestial city must pass ; he is humbled only to be the more exalted. In this state prayer and patience are the only remedies :—it was a wholesome terror which checked the child when he was straying too widely and too confidently, and urged him to run back for protection to his father's arms. So, not to those only who are leading a sinful life, but even to those who are labouring in Christ's service, it is useful that their eyes should be sometimes opened to the overwhelming awfulness of the situation in which we all daily stand ;

that, beholding God's perfect holiness on the one hand, and the vastness and the darkness of the unknown world on the other, they may feel that their own best works and most earnest labour are as nothing amidst objects so infinite ; and that indeed their only deliverance and safety can consist in throwing themselves wholly on the mercy of God, through Christ, believing in Him ; trusting to Him, and clinging to Him with an intensity of faith and love.

## SERMON XXVI.

*SPIRIT, SOUL, AND BODY*

I THESSALONIANS v. 23.

*I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.*

IN the ordinary language of men, which the Scripture itself does not hesitate commonly to adopt, a twofold division of our nature is recognised; man is said to be made up of body and soul. By the word ‘Soul’ are understood both his moral and intellectual faculties, those points in his being which distinguish him from other animals, and to cultivate which is the proper business of his life. It is thus used to signify the highest part of his nature; and therefore, in the language of those who know the true objects of his highest faculties, and the exalted state to which they might be raised hereafter, it expresses his immortal part in contradistinction to that which is to perish with this present life. ‘Fear not them who can kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do; but rather fear him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell.’ And again, ‘What shall it profit a man if he should gain the whole world and lose his own soul? Or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?’

But as the notions generally entertained respecting

the highest part of our nature, its objects, and its future capacities, were in many respects highly erroneous : as our relation to God as our Maker and Father was lost sight of, and He consequently was not regarded as the great object and centre of our being ; and further, as from ceasing so to regard Him, men naturally lost all clear and lively hopes of immortality ; the word ‘soul,’<sup>1</sup> in its common acceptance among the Greeks, was inadequate to express the loftier and more enlightened conceptions of a Christian, with respect to his best faculties, and their most perfect state. We find, therefore, in several passages of the New Testament, that a third term is employed in addition to those of Body and Soul ; and intended to express something superior to the soul in its common sense, as the soul is superior to the body. This third term is ‘Spirit,’ which, in the signification now alluded to, seems applicable to Christians only ; and to denote that perfection of human nature which it was the object of the Gospel to accomplish : an understanding that should know God, and affections that should love Him ; or in other words, a spiritual creature capable of enjoying communion with the Father of spirits, and from that relation being naturally immortal ; ‘for God is not the God of the dead, but the God of the living ; for all live unto him.’

Thus then when this threefold division of our nature is mentioned, the term Body expresses those appetites which

<sup>1</sup> The statement here given exactly corresponds with the explanation given by Suidas, of the expression ψυχικὸς ἄνθρωπος.—His words are as follows:—Ἐκ ψυχῆς καὶ σώματος ὁ ἄνθρωπος· ὅταν μὲν οὖν πράττη τι τῶν ἀφ’ ἑτέρας μέζονος τιμῆς, τῆς ἀπὸ τοῦ πνεύματος ἐνεργείας· οὐ γὰρ ἀρκεῖ ἡ ψυχὴ εἰς κατόρθωμα, εἰ μὴ ἀπολαύσει τῆς τοῦ πνεύματος βοηθείας.—ὥσπερ δὲ σαρκικὸς ἄνθρωπος λέγεται ὁ τῇ σαρκὶ δουλεύων, οὕτω ψυχικὸν καλεῖ ὁ Ἀπόστολος τὸν τοῖς ἀνθρωπικοῖς λογισμοῖς τὰ πράγματα ἐπιτρέποντα, καὶ τὴν τοῦ πνεύματος ἐνεργείαν μὴ δεχόμενον.

we have in common with the brutes ; the term Soul denotes our moral and intellectual faculties, directed only towards objects of this world, and not exalted by the hope of immortality ; and the term Spirit takes these same faculties when directed towards God and heavenly things, and from the purity, the greatness, and the perfect goodness of Him who is their object ‘ transformed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord.’

Thus the term ‘Flesh,’ when opposed to ‘Spirit,’ embraces very frequently the joint significations of body and soul, as expressing our whole unregenerate nature, before its conceptions, its hopes, and its affections, are awakened to their true and perfect object. So also the word which in our Bible is translated ‘natural,’ and ‘sensual,’ and which literally signifies ‘of or belonging to the soul,’ is equally opposed to the word ‘spiritual,’ and expresses also not only the faculties of our souls, but the appetites of our bodies. ‘There is a natural body, and there is a spiritual body,’ or in other words, ‘There is a body with a soul, and there is a body with a spirit ;’ that is, ‘there is a body fitted for the purposes of earthly life, and there is a body fitted for immortality.’ And, in the Epistle of St. Jude, men are spoken of as ‘sensual, having not the Spirit,’ or in other words, having their faculties of body and mind fitted for the pursuit of earthly objects, without having the sense or the desire of heavenly things.’ They are the same class of persons whom St. Paul describes in the Epistle to the Ephesians, as ‘fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind :’ that is, of their bodies, and of their reasonable souls, but not of their spirits ; those desires which they had in common with the brutes, such as the desires of the flesh, and those which they had as men who after seventy or eighty years would be no better than the brutes ; that is, the desires of the mind. Thus

the three temptations of our Lord, adopting the order of St. Luke's account of them, appear to have been addressed successively to His body, His soul, and His spirit : the call to turn the stones into bread was a temptation to His bodily appetites ; the offer of all the kingdoms of the world and the glory of them, appealed to the desires of His mind or soul ; while the last and greatest temptation, to be puffed up by the favour of God, and proudly to presume upon it, was designed to affect His spirit, or that part of His nature which knew God and loved Him, and desired His love.

It may be observed further, that although the term 'Soul' includes both our moral and intellectual nature so far as it regards this life only, yet it appears in a particular manner to express the latter. Indeed, if we set aside our relation to God as His creatures, if we dissolve the community or covenant subsisting between Him and ourselves, it seems as if the faculties of the understanding rose at once in our estimation, and the intellect or mind assumed a place among the moral virtues. When God is regarded solely as the *Supreme Being*, His infinite wisdom may naturally appear to us His most peculiar attribute ; and thus Aristotle<sup>1</sup> urges the exercise of our contemplative understanding, as the means by which we may most resemble God ; for intellect is that which has most kindred with the divine nature. Whereas St. John,<sup>2</sup> accustomed to look upon God as *He is related to us*, considers His essential attribute to be love ; and directs us therefore to seek to become one with God, by cultivating our affections. 'God,' he says, 'is love ; and whoso dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him.' In speaking of the soul, therefore, as distinguished from the spirit, although both terms include our moral and intellectual nature ; yet in the first, intellect or reason is the predominant

<sup>1</sup> Ethic. Nicomach. x. 8.

<sup>2</sup> 1 Epist. iv. 16.

idea; while in the second, though knowledge is not excluded, the principal idea is of charity or love.

Now the great difference between Christianity and other systems for the regulation of human life consists in its thus bringing clearly into view the third or spiritual part of our nature, and dwelling upon it as upon the seed, if I may so speak, from which the real fruit of our lives is to be looked for. And this it does without undervaluing or despising the other two; they are both indeed to be disciplined so far as to render them obedient to the spirit; but no further; they are to be servants, and not masters; but servants whose usefulness is great, and who are to be treated kindly and improved to the utmost, that they may work better and more vigorously. It is the Apostle's prayer, that our 'whole spirit and soul and body may be preserved blameless to the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ,' and we can do no better than heartily join in it, and labour on our own parts to bring it to pass. Let us see then what is that blamelessness, or that degree of perfection in which we should desire all these parts of our nature to be found when we stand before Christ's judgment seat.

I will begin then first with the body. With the government of this part all are engaged at some periods of their lives, and many of us through the whole of them. All more or less can understand the temptations to indolence and comfort, and to the indulgence of intemperance and sensuality. Bodily pleasures are the first which we ever enjoy, and our earliest lessons in virtue are learnt in struggling not to give way to them. Those who do freely yield to them form the lowest class of human characters: the most coarsely selfish, the least differing from the beasts that perish. And in this class are to be reckoned not only the drunkard and the unchaste person, but he who is soft and indolent, and luxurious in his manner of life, and he also who is on the contrary given up to the pursuit of



bodily exercises, which keep up a high state of health and animal spirits, and a very low state of thought and principle. Of this last description, the character of Esau seems to furnish an example. He is spoken of as being exceedingly fond of the sports of the field; as being very thoughtless, and very violent in his passions; yet with much of that warmth and generosity of temper which often exist in an ill-governed and unprincipled mind. He is called in the Epistle to the Hebrews, a 'profane person;' and this is naturally the case; for he who cannot even raise himself to the pleasures of the mind or soul, can hardly have much relish for those of the spirit: he must be a reasonable man before he can have any notion of the feelings of a child of God formed for immortality. And how many thousands are there in the world who live like Esau! Health and strength of body make them so naturally, if the soul and spirit are not kept in proportionate vigour: they have one part of their nature in a very sound state, while the other two are weak and sickly; the appetites, therefore, of the sound part are keen, and its enjoyments lively; it in short is alive, while the soul and the spirit are almost dead; and, therefore, the man lives what may be called a bodily or an animal life; and if, like the brutes, he were made up of nothing but body, he would be in the perfection of his nature; but as a man with a soul, and much more as a Christian with a spirit, he is in the lowest state of degradation, neither fit for the life that is to come, nor yet for the life of a reasonable being even in this present world.

This, then, is the secret of the faults of a most large class of our fellow-creatures; from the gross vices of gluttony, and drunkenness, and lust, to the unthinking and unprincipled life of those who think of nothing but bodily exercises and animal enjoyments, and extending downwards to the mere idleness of our boyhood. The mischief

is, that the body has outrun the soul and the spirit; or that, in other words, the man is living according to the flesh. To keep down the body, therefore, and to bring it into subjection, was the object of the fastings and various kinds of bodily mortification, which good men in old times so often practised. And certainly with regard to gluttony and drunkenness and lust, direct abstinence, and the lowering the body by strict self-denial, may be in some cases the most effectual remedies. But generally speaking, what is wanted is not to lower or weaken the body, but to raise and strengthen the soul and spirit; that the body may be ready and able to do their work, which it cannot do unless it be itself sound and vigorous.

The soul is that part which is most commonly strengthened by the growth and cultivation of the powers of the understanding, and by the various objects which attract the mind as we come forth into actual life. The great prizes which the world has to offer, wealth, and fame, and power, nay, even the pleasures of society and the ability to marry, and thus to obtain the sweets of domestic happiness, cannot commonly be gained without industry, which implies at the very least the existence of some thought and steadiness of character,—the exercise of more than the mere faculties of the body. And the general tendency of civilised society is to call forth our minds into action rather than our bodies; so that, as we advance in life, the soul naturally takes the lead. In persons of very powerful understandings this happens as a matter of course: in them the mind is healthy and vigorous, and wherever that is the case, its pleasures are preferred to those of the body, however strong may be our relish for those also. Thus great writers, great statesmen, great generals, great men of science, devote themselves with pleasure to their several employments; they discharge the graver business of life, and enjoy its honours and rewards; and though if they

retain their health and strength, they can enjoy keenly the pleasures and exercises of the body, yet they look upon them as very inferior to those of the mind, and regard with contempt those persons who place their chief notion of happiness in mere animal and bodily enjoyments.

Here, then, we have a class of persons which includes the most famous names in the history of the world, and a large portion of the ablest and most respected members of society. Here we have the powers of the mind carefully cultivated and devoted to useful purposes; great works often accomplished for the good of mankind, and the fabric of human society at once strengthened and ornamented. This is the life assuredly of a reasonable creature: of one widely separated from the beasts: of one, looking only to this visible world, noble and admirable. And here, without the Gospel, our progress must stop; here is the life of body and soul, in health and vigour: but a few years must destroy the strength of both, and if death be long delayed, both will be so much weakened by natural decay, that it is plain that they have gone through their appointed course; and that ‘that which decayeth and waxeth old, is ready to vanish away.’

But the Gospel, which has brought life and immortality to light, has also pointed out to us that part of our nature by which we can be fitted for it, that is our Spirit, our spiritual hopes and our feelings of love and charity. Now it as much destroys our Christian perfection, if the soul be preferred to the spirit, as it does our reasonable perfection, if the body be preferred to the soul. And, as they are few in comparison with whom the soul is more than the body, so are they still fewer with whom the spirit is more than the soul. Under favourable circumstances in civilised society, the progress of life indeed, with little effort on our part, sets the soul above the body; but without very great efforts and great prayers, and the

aid of Him by whom our spirits were made, it is not possible to set the spirit above the soul. It is not natural to transplant to earth the character which prevails in heaven; earthly excellence may be expected here as a natural fruit; but spiritual or heavenly excellence is the gift of God in a higher sense; and to be enabled to receive it, we must, in the language of Christ, be born again. And, therefore, it is not to be looked for by the mere course of years and steadying of the character; it will not come naturally at any period of life, for it is not natural, but something above our first nature, to which we may be raised through God's grace, if we follow His guidance; but at which we never should arrive of ourselves. The excellence of our spirits is to feel and hope as a spiritual and immortal creature; as the child of God by every tie of creation, of redemption, and of that gracious indwelling in our hearts by which He draws us to the knowledge and love of Himself; as standing with an immortal life open before us, to be passed in communion with God, and the spirits of those who have been renewed after God's image. As we cultivate then the faculties of a child's mind or soul, when we teach him his common lessons, and when we lay before him his earthly prospects as a reasonable creature; so we cultivate the faculties of his spirit; when we teach him Whose he is, and for what end beyond this earth he was brought into the world; and when we open to him the Gospel of Christ, and tell him by Whose love he is continually surrounded, Who so loved him that He laid down His life for his sake, and Who is watching over his every childish prayer and thought of good which He has Himself inspired, to bless it, and to make it bring forth more fruit.

But if it happens, and how often does it so happen! that while the body and the soul are carefully attended to, the spirit is entirely neglected; if that, whose feelings and

desires are by nature the weakest, be left most completely to itself, how can we expect that it will not be quite overgrown in after life by those other two plants, which not only strike more naturally in the soil, but on which so much more care and labour have been bestowed? And then men speak slightly of spiritual motives, of the force of love of Christ, and of the hope of heaven, when they see them overwhelmed by so many disadvantages; not cultivated by early habit, but supplanted by other and far more easily awakened motives, till the body and soul have perhaps had twenty years or more to grow and improve in, before the spirit receive any care at all.

But where the spirit is early cultivated, and its desires and affections are raised to their proper place in our nature, the government of our whole lives; then how beautiful is the sight, to behold the spirit and soul and body each strong and vigorous, and each working in its proper order; the soul and body being the ready and able ministers to the spirit; and the strong and temperate pulse, the active limbs, the rich imagination, the keen and deep understanding, and the clear and true judgment, all serving to the purposes of our immortal life, by helping our spirits to do our Master's work on earth; all working healthfully and with pleasure, yet none presuming above their place, nor thinking that the object of man's life is to perfect them only, or chiefly. That object is to perfect our spirits, our desires after perfect happiness, our love to God, and to men as the children of God: to perfect in us that part of our being, which alone is remote from selfishness; or to which rather, by the perfect constitution and ordinance of our Maker, its own happiness follows, certainly yet unconsciously, in proportion as it more entirely loses sight of itself, and advances further and further in the love of others, in the bond of perfectness, which is Charity.

## SERMON XXVII.

*SPIRIT, SOUL, AND BODY.*

2 CORINTHIANS v. 4.

*For we that are in this tabernacle do groan, being burdened: not for that we would be unclothed, but clothed upon, that mortality might be swallowed up of life.*

IN a former sermon I spoke of the threefold distinction in our nature ; the Body, the Soul, and the Spirit : I said that the body and the soul, which were in general by far the most carefully cultivated, were in fact of much less value than the spirit, and that their greatest perfection was when they were the active servants of the spirit, but still no more than its servants ; and that the order of our natures was ruined when they aspired or were suffered to be masters. More, however, I think remains to be said on the subject ; and particularly with respect to that large class of persons whom bodily weakness, or poverty, or a deficiency in the powers of the understanding, deprives of all hope of bringing their bodies or minds to a vigorous and healthy state ; and who would therefore be in a very helpless condition if they were not able to improve and perfect their spirits.

I said before, that the great mass of mankind attended to their bodies much more than to their souls, or to their spirits ; and therefore that their lives were neither those of reasonable nor of immortal creatures ; not so much worthy of men or of Christians, as of beasts. On the

other hand, there have been those in former times, who seemed to think that they could not cultivate their spirits without lowering and weakening their body. They fasted, they wore coarse clothing: sometimes they gave up all cleanliness, because they thought that that was too great a pampering to their body: and going on further, they deprived themselves of sleep, they wore shirts of horse-hair, and scourged themselves; all with the view of keeping their flesh in subjection to their spirit. In some, these notions went to such a length that they could not bear the thought of a resurrection, which would restore them to their bodies once more, but rather fancied that their spirits would then only be properly purified when they were released from their prison of the flesh.

It is in answer to such opinions that St. Paul declares that ‘bodily exercise,’ or discipline, ‘profiteth little;’ that it is not the lowering of the body which is needed; but the raising of the spirit: and again, in the words of the text, he says, that he does not wish to be ‘unclothed;’ that is, to get rid of his body; but to be ‘clothed upon:’ that is, to have something higher and better added to it,—‘that mortality might be swallowed up of life.’ But it still has very generally happened, that persons have either thought only of their bodies; or have neglected them, and foolishly weakened them. Few have tried to make them useful servants to their spirits; but have either served them as masters, or have oppressed and misused them as enemies. We are told, however, to glorify God in our body, as well as in our spirit; and certainly we are so framed, that each part of our nature would be benefited by the good and sound state of the other parts, if each were properly cultivated: if one member suffer, all the members suffer with it; or one member be honoured, all the members rejoice with it. This view of what our body requires of us, would lead us in the first place to temper-

ance in eating and drinking ; to avoid indolence, and yet at the same time not to weaken the faculties by denying ourselves proper rest : in short, to preserve that general health and hardiness which shall be at all times fit to serve the purposes of our soul and spirit ; neither running into wildness and riotousness of spirits, nor yet sinking into languor and nervous feebleness, such as often follows upon a neglect of our bodily health and strength, under the vain impression of mortifying the flesh in any other way than by raising and strengthening the spirit.

So again with the soul or mind ; as I mentioned the mischief of making this the first thing to be considered, so there is a mischief, on the other hand, into which well-meaning people sometimes fall ; that, namely of being afraid of knowledge and the improvement of their understandings, as if they were inconsistent with Christian meekness and simplicity. But here, too, the Apostle's language is strongly against them : ' Brethren,' he says, ' be not children in understanding ; howbeit, in malice be ye children, but in understanding be men.' If, indeed, the New Testament contained a string of rules fitted in so many words to guide us in every action of our lives, then it might be enough to open the volume, and there to find the direction how to act, without any exertion of our own. But as this is contrary to one of the main purposes for which the Gospel was given, that is, to bring us to the highest pitch of goodness of which we are capable, by leaving us to be guided by the spirit rather than by the letter : as our business is to apply the principles of Christ and His Apostles to all the ever-varying cases of private and public life, under circumstances infinitely different from those in which the first Christians were placed ; and as this requires very often great thought and attention, an extensive knowledge, and a sound judgment ; so there is abundant cause for us to try to bring our minds



to as high a pitch as possible, and to covet earnestly the precious gifts of the understanding, although well aware that there is still a more excellent way, for the better walking in which the gifts of the understanding are chiefly desirable.

There is, indeed, a more excellent way ; so much more excellent than those other two which I have mentioned, that it, even if followed alone, will bring us safely to the kingdom of Christ ; while they, without this, will be, at the end of our life on earth, perfectly useless. And as it is the most excellent, so it is the only one which is within the reach of all who desire it. Care and temperance may, indeed, do much for the body ; learning and diligence can do very much for the soul ; but there are many cases of weakness and disease, in which it were to mock the patient to tell him that he could make his body actively useful ; and there are many cases too, either of natural dulness, or of ignorance arising from circumstances, in which it would be vain to tell a man that he could make his understanding vigorous and enlightened. But with the spirit it is otherwise : there are, indeed, many cases in which its recovery is hopeless, because we will not turn ; but none in which we cannot turn if we do will it. Hence the numbers of those whose spirits have been fashioned after the image of Christ, are confined to no one rank of life, to no one state of bodily health and strength, to no one level of understanding, to no one set of tempers, and to no one condition of wealth or poverty, or business in life. The bedridden, and the hardest and strongest ; the simplest, and the ablest, and most learned ; the cheerful and the serious ; the rich and the poor ; the lawyer, soldier, and labourer ; all have given proofs, ere now, that all differences are done away in Christ, and that, to all alike, the gates of the heavenly city for ever stand open wide. All, then, may cultivate their spirits with a certainty of success, if they

have but the will to attempt it. Here it is that we may pray for God's blessing, with the full assurance that our prayer is according to His will, and that His Spirit will intercede for and work together with our own. It now remains to be shown what is the way in which they can best be cultivated.

The most natural time for sowing the seed of eternal life, as well as of our reasonable life in this world, is in our early childhood. This can never be repeated too often; not, indeed, for our own sakes chiefly, who have long since passed our childhood, and to whom, whether it has been improved or wasted, it can never be recalled; but for the sakes of those whose salvation (it is a very awful thought, but yet it is no more than the truth) may depend upon our care or neglect of them. And here it may be said, that it is not to cultivate the spirit to teach sacred things in the way of lessons, or even to make a child familiar with the history of the Bible. This may be done, and yet the mind or understanding may be alone the better for it. But in whatever degree we can make Christian feelings powerful within him, in proportion as we can make him obedient, humble, meek, and self-denying, in so far we are preparing his spirit for its eternal dwelling-place, and are training him up as an immortal creature. It were a great blessing, indeed, that he should add to all this the love and fear of God, and, above all, the love of God in Christ. And it is certain that children can understand and feel something about these things much earlier than is often believed: but then these feelings are conveyed to them by talking at different times and often about God's goodness, and Christ's love for them, much more than by lessons, or learning the Catechism; and the earlier that we endeavour to awaken them in the mind of a child, it is so much the better. All children, however, will not receive them equally; and pious parents may

be sometimes shocked to see their children perfectly careless about all that is told them of God and Christ, while at the same time, in other respects, they may be good and obedient to their parents, and striving against falsehood and selfishness. Still their parents may think that the spiritual education can be making no progress, where spiritual things are listened to with no relish for them; nay some, it may be, would even look at the growth of their child's moral feelings with suspicion and alarm, whilst they were not sanctified by faith in Christ. But such persons should remember that they and their children stand in a different situation; even as God dealt very differently with our fathers in the first ages of the world from the manner in which He deals with us now. To walk by faith and not by sight, is indeed the mark of the Christian; but then the Christian is man in his highest possible state of perfection: and this spiritual perfection can no more be looked for in a child, than the perfection of the understanding or of the body. The child must walk by sight, just as miracles were given in the old times to furnish visible proofs of God's providence, whilst we now are left, not comfortless, surely, nor without God in the world; but with God much nearer to us than ever, if we would but acknowledge Him, dwelling in our hearts, and purifying and enlightening us, though unseen. To a child, therefore, his parents are sent by God's own dispensation as in the place of God: 'Lo;' it is said by God to Moses, 'I have made thee a God to Pharaoh;' and in like manner the whole dispensation of the Old Testament is called the dispensation of angels or ministers, because some intermediate object, or person, or feeling, came in between man and the Most High God. While, therefore, every good parent will long earnestly to see his child's mind open to the sense of heavenly things, and will strive to bring it to that understanding of them, he yet need not be dis-

couraged if he sees his efforts to awaken the attention of these points at present quite unsuccessful. It is a most universal truth, 'that is not first which is spiritual, but that which is natural; and afterwards that which is spiritual.' Train a child to habits of obedience and self-denial, encourage his feelings of confidence and love towards his parents, of kindness and attention towards every one, and you are preparing him surely and steadily for that more advanced state, when his Heavenly Parent may succeed as the object of those feelings which are now directed only towards his earthly ones, and when the hope of eternal glory may take the place of those lower hopes of some future reward if he withstand present temptation, by which alone he as yet is capable of being affected.

But now for ourselves. How are we to cultivate our own spirits, especially if, as is too often the case, they have hitherto been greatly neglected? I would say, let us consider the moment of our death, not reckoning it as particularly near at hand, but coming at its natural period at the close of old age; still, a very little serious consideration of it will teach us how much more the spirit deserves our care than either our body or our mind. For to us who are in the vigour of life, we know by this time what can be made of our bodies and of our minds; we know that little further advancement can be looked for in the powers of either. I do not say that we should therefore neglect them, or let them fall to decay; but that being arrived at our prime, as far as they are concerned, nature itself should teach us to bestow more care on that other part of us which is capable of an almost infinite improvement, whose highest perfection is yet far distant from us.

Then, again, if we look back twenty years even in our own lives, how soon does the time seem to have hurried away; if

we look at them as forming a part of history, and of the public transactions of the country, they seem almost dwindled into nothing: yet looking onwards to another such period,—whose flight however will seem far more rapid, as the changes in our ordinary life in manhood are less strongly marked than those from boyhood to youth, and from youth to manhood,—looking onwards twenty years more, and what will be our remaining interest in the worldly objects that now most delight us? We shall have reached the evening of our life, and the slanting shadows and the softer light will tell us how many hours have passed since the sun was in his noonday strength. The body then will have certainly lost much of its vigour; the mind, perhaps, will have suffered also; there will be manifest signs that their day of work will soon be over. But how will it be with the spirit, and with the spiritual desires and interests? They will be looking forward with a more lively hope to the first faint streaks of the dawn of the everlasting day; while the body and mind, like those who have spent the night in revelling, regard the coming light as a signal that their time of enjoyment is over. Twenty years yet again, and our bodies will be mouldering amongst those whom we pass by to enter these walls; and our minds and earthly schemes will be no more than those of the merest madman. And where shall our spirits then be, my brethren? With Christ, or with the devil? in the first opening spring of an eternity of joy, or in the beginning of such an endless death as is too dreadful to be regarded for an instant?

If this, however, were no more than an awful picture to awaken our feelings, it would have no place here: it is rather a sober truth, and it leads to the soberest and most peaceful wisdom. Let us anticipate the feelings of forty years hence,—it sounds no long period when we mention it,—and hope and fear, and love and act, as we shall then

wish to have done. All may do this equally : the cultivation of our spirits, the character to fit us for heaven, may be learned under all circumstances. In this respect we are all equal ; the rich and the poor, the healthy and the sick, those with great means of doing good, and those with no more than the widow's mite, in influence, and station, and ability : yet all may work the work of God equally : for His work is to believe on Him whom He hath sent, to crucify with Christ every evil and corrupt affection, to be renewed after His image. His image is shown forth as much in the patient love and resignation of those who are sick, and old, and poor, as in the active love and wide-spreading usefulness of the strong and the wealthy ; nay, it is often shown forth so much the more truly, as it is then most united with a meek and lowly spirit, throwing itself with a more childlike confidence upon the bosom of its heavenly Father. For Christ does not call upon us to imitate Him in His mighty works, but to learn of Him, for He is meek and lowly in heart, and so we shall find rest to our souls.

Thus cultivating our spirits, thus growing up to our immortal life, what are twenty years past away, but twenty years that divided us from our eternal rest ? what are forty, but the end of our journey through the wilderness—the entrance into Canaan at last vouchsafed to us ? Our bodies and our minds will then be laid aside, not with dishonour nor with a vain regret ; it is time for the blossom to shed when the fruit is set : and though we would not be unclothed, we may yet desire to be clothed upon, that mortality may be swallowed up of life.

## SERMON XXVIII.

*THE WORK OF THE COMFORTER.*

JOHN xvi. 31, 32.

*Jesus answered them, Do ye now believe? Behold, the hour cometh, yea, is now come, that ye shall be scattered every man to his own, and shall leave me alone.*

THIS answer was made to a sort of burst of entire confidence in our Lord, which had just been drawn forth from His Disciples. ‘Now we are sure that thou knowest all things, and needest not that any man should ask thee: by this we believe that thou camest forth from God.’ They seemed at last to have been entirely convinced of their Master’s power and knowledge, and to be satisfied that He was the Son of God. But He who knew what was in their hearts better than they did themselves, saw that this faith was not strong enough to overcome the world; and although it now seemed so lively, yet within two or three short hours it would become as dead; that they would all desert Him when they saw Him in the power of His enemies, although they now felt so sure that He came out from God. And so it happened; St. Matthew tells the story of his own weakness, and that of his fellow-disciples; as soon as the soldiers had laid hold on Jesus, he says that all the Disciples forsook Him and fled. They thought no longer that He was the Redeemer whom they had expected; and their

feelings were well expressed by the confession of the two who walked with Christ towards Emmaus, after His resurrection; 'We trusted that it had been he who should have redeemed Israel;' as if they had said, 'We did trust so once, but his death has shown us that our hope deceived us.'

But if we turn over a few pages of the Scripture, and look at the feelings and conduct of these same men seven weeks afterwards, how strikingly different a picture is presented to us. Instead of saying, 'We trusted that it had been he who should have redeemed Israel,' their language now is, 'Let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God hath made that same Jesus whom ye crucified, both Lord and Christ.' Instead of forsaking their Master, and not daring to share His danger, they now answer to the chief priests and elders, who had commanded them not to speak or teach in His name: 'Whether it be right in the sight of God to hearken unto you more than unto God, judge ye: for we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard.' And again, after they had been beaten, and commanded the second time to be silent, 'they rejoiced that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for his name: and daily in the temple and in every house, they ceased not to teach and to preach Jesus Christ.'

This great change did not arise solely from their having seen Christ after His resurrection, and being thus convinced that He was the Son of God; they had seen miracles enough before during His lifetime to convince them of that, and they had declared their full belief in it; and yet when the hour of danger came, they were scattered every man to his own, and left Him alone. So it would have been even after His resurrection, if their hearts had not been strengthened, and their faith confirmed by the descent of the Holy Ghost. The prayer which they had once before addressed to Him, 'Lord, increase our faith,' was



now fully answered ; a new spirit of wisdom, and courage, and holiness, was put into them ; and they who before could so misunderstand our Lord, as to think that He spoke of the leaven of bread, when He told them to beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and of Herod, were now so filled with the spirit of a sound understanding, that nothing is to be found in their writings which is not in the highest degree sensible and useful. It would be difficult to fancy a more complete instance of that great truth, that we are not sufficient of ourselves to think anything as of ourselves, but our sufficiency is of God.

From what has been said too, we may learn to understand those other words of our Lord, which many persons, I doubt not, read with extreme surprise. He said to his Disciples, ‘ I tell you the truth : it is expedient for you that I go away, for if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you ; but if I depart, I will send him unto you.’ Many, perhaps, cannot understand how the condition of Christians now is better than that of the Disciples when our Lord was upon earth ; how the Comforter, whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth Him not, neither knoweth Him, can be a greater blessing than the visible presence of Jesus Christ in the flesh. Yet if we look at the character of the Apostles, we shall see that our Lord’s words were exactly true. It was expedient for them that He should go away, because while He was with them their faith often wavered, and their hearts were often more turned to earthly things than to heavenly : but when He went from them, and the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, visited them in His room, they were led into all truth, and their whole minds were renewed by that spiritual baptism, so as to be fit for the kingdom of God. It is not then the sight of Jesus Christ in the flesh that we should so fondly desire ; nor should we think that had we stood by His side, and heard His words, and seen His miracles,

that to do His will would have been easy. How many stood by Him, and heard Him, and saw Him in vain! The Comforter must come to us before we are fit to sit down with Christ in His heavenly kingdom: we ourselves must be changed, or else He would eat and drink with us, and teach in our streets, to no purpose. That Comforter is now ever working in the hearts of Christ's true servants, and therefore, to them, as was promised, Christ still manifests Himself. Though now they see Him not, yet believing, they rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory; a far happier state than theirs, who saw Him, and yet did not believe in Him.

But the words which I have taken for my text, apply not only to the Apostles, to whom they were actually spoken, but to us. Whenever we assemble in this place, they are the very words which Christ addresses to a considerable number at least amongst us. 'Do ye now believe?' Are you for a moment full of better thoughts than you commonly are? Is the world which comes after death present to your minds in something like its own immensely awful reality? Do you feel indeed as if Christ were near, even at the doors, and as if all that the world can offer would be but a poor payment for disobeying Him, or neglecting Him? We do indeed, I believe, so think and so feel in this place very frequently. But what are His words, unto whom all hearts are open? 'Behold, the hour cometh, yea, is now come, when you shall be scattered every man to his own, and shall leave me alone!' The hour cometh, yea, is now come; so soon as the words of the last prayer or blessing are ended, we are scattered every man to our own; we go our different ways, and our feet do not carry us faster from God's visible house, the church, than our evil natures hurry away our thoughts and hearts from His blessed and invisible mansion, His eternal kingdom in the heavens. So it was of old; while the meat was yet

in their mouths, the heavy wrath of God fell upon them ; and while we are as yet feeding on the bread of life, it loses its virtues to us, and we turn each to some gall of bitterness of his own.

Now to what is it owing, that this so often happens to us : why, when we had begun to run well, does Satan hinder us that we should not obey the truth ? I am afraid the case with us is the same as it was with the Apostles ; the Comforter has not come unto us : we have heard Christ, and have believed in Him for the time ; but because the stony heart which we all have by nature, has not been changed by the Spirit into an heart of flesh, therefore, like the stony ground in the parable, the seed sown is presently scorched, because it wants moisture : we have no root, and thus for awhile believe, but in time of temptation fall away. Now if, as I suppose is most certainly the case, very many of those that hear me have often felt in themselves this failure of their good resolutions ; if believing while yet they sat in the church, yet within an hour afterwards they were scattered every man to his own, and have forsaken Christ their master ; it must concern them very deeply to have the dangers of this state clearly laid before them, and the means by which, through the grace of Christ, they may be delivered from it.

The danger of this state. For of this St. Paul speaks clearly enough, when he describes him who is in it in these strong words : ‘O wretched man that I am ! who shall deliver me from the body of this death ?’ Who is the wretched man of whom he speaks ? Is it one who hates God and His service, a hardened sinner, who despises all reproof ? No ; it is one who delights in the law of God after the inward man ; that is, one whose conscience and judgment fully approve the truths of the Gospel ; one whose better mind loves the commandments of Christ ; who, when he hears His word, hears Him gladly ; and is ready to say while hearing

it, 'It is good for us to be here.' But unhappily there is another law in his members warring against the law of his mind, and bringing him into captivity to the law of sin which is in his members. So he is the captive of sin; that is, sin has got the better of him, and makes him serve sin: he does not like his service; nay, he feels very often for a short time the blessedness of Christian liberty; but sin is still too strong for him; he is dragged down again, and his life and practice is under the dominion of sin, however bitterly he may groan under it: he lives according to the flesh and therefore he will die. I have been quoting very largely from the seventh and eighth chapters of the Epistle to the Romans, and if any one will turn to them, it will be seen that St. Paul talks of a deliverance through the Spirit; he speaks of a man as being enabled by the Spirit to overcome the flesh, and to walk in newness of life; and that thus he is redeemed and saved; but that they who are held captive by the flesh, who are not set free by the Spirit, that they are not redeemed nor saved; for on the contrary they are yet in bondage; they are,—however much they may feel the wretchedness of their state,—they are in the power of Satan, and led by him according to his will; they are still therefore in the hands of their enemy, the enemy of their souls who destroys with everlasting destruction all those whom he can keep within his power.

Remember, then, that to feel the burden of our captivity is not the same thing as to be free from it; to love God in our better mind, or as St. Paul calls it, 'according to the inward man,' is not the same thing as to walk according to that love and to show it forth in our lives and actions. So that though we may now believe; yet if the hour cometh when we shall be scattered every man to his own, assuredly we cannot reckon ourselves as belonging to that flock of the good Shepherd, who hear His voice, and also follow Him

whithersoever He goeth, so that they never go astray from the fold. Then how shall we be made free? how shall we be able to love Christ always, to walk as well as to feel according to the Spirit, and not according to the flesh?

The answer is, that we must attain to the Spirit of life which is in Christ Jesus; that the Spirit of God must abide in us and change us into His own image, that we may be delivered from sin and the flesh, and serve them no more at all. And yet this great truth, on which our whole salvation depends, and without which Christ has died in vain for each of us, as far as we ourselves are concerned—this great truth is for ever forgotten; and of all the points which the Gospel teaches us, this is, perhaps, the least regarded. So true are our Lord's words of that blessed Spirit whom we thus continually despise, 'that the world cannot receive him, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him.' We pray to God; few, very few, none of us there are, I trust, who do not pray to Him; but I greatly doubt whether the prayer for the gift of the Holy Ghost, the prayer for the real enjoyment of that blessing which Christ has promised to His true disciples, that the Comforter should abide with them for ever—whether this be so often a part of our address to God as it ought to be. But consider that this is the very main thing of all. We are living, if I may so speak, under the dispensation of the Spirit; in that character God now reveals Himself to His people, as He did of old by conversing visibly with the prophets and patriarchs; or in the latter times, when he became manifest in the flesh, in the person of Jesus Christ. He who does not know God the Holy Ghost, cannot now know God at all. Though we have known Christ after the flesh, says St. Paul, yet henceforth know we Him so no more: the Divine presence is henceforth to be of a different kind, not less real, but only revealing itself to our minds instead of our bodily senses.

We must pray then for the Spirit ; the Spirit of holiness, the Spirit of liberty, the Spirit of peace, and love, and joy. As the apostles were changed by its influence, so even shall we be. When He had once entered into their hearts, we hear no more of their being scattered every man to his own, and leaving their Saviour alone. The words of Peter, which, spoken in his own unaided strength, were but an idle boast, soon proved by the event, ‘Lord, I will lay down my life for thy sake,’ were, after the Spirit had once made him free from the bondage of corruption, the words of truth and soberness ; and, according to his words, so did it happen to him.

And may not we hope the very same thing in our own case ; that we, who now make vain professions of faith and love to our Lord in the Church—vain, because they are so soon broken, however sincerely they were uttered at the time ; that we who are scattered every man to his own, each after his several idols, which he worships with the service of his daily living ; that we may no more go astray from our Shepherd ; but even as we believe in Him when our hearts are most warmed within us, so we may also keep the assurance of our faith stedfast to the end ? Indeed we may hope for it ; for is it not God’s own promise, ‘ If ye being evil know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father which is in heaven give his Holy Spirit to them that ask him ? ’ He does not say only to those who are already His children, but to those that ask Him, however little of a childlike affection they may yet feel towards Him ; yet if they do but ask, they shall have their portion of the children’s bread. We may hope for it, then, if we will but pray for it with a sincere and earnest desire. We shall feel the blessing if we persist ; not coming indeed suddenly, nor all at once rendering us perfect ; but loosening one bond of sin after another, and strengthening one good affection

after another, till we shall be free altogether, and full grown in faith, and hope, and love : a state of happiness, which the more we think upon it will seem the more desirable ; and which, indeed, is but a very short way removed from the entrance into the kingdom of God, where they who do enter can never for one instant be scattered from their Lord, but follow Him whithersoever He goeth, night and day serving Him and praising Him with an entire and everlasting love.

## SERMON XXIX.

(PREACHED ON WHITSUNDAY.)

*THE DISPENSATION OF THE SPIRIT.*

EPHESIANS ii. 22.

*In whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit.*

OF all the events which the Christian year commemorates there is none which more immediately concerns us now than that recorded in this day's service. The day of Pentecost was, in fact, the birth-day of Christianity ; for it was then that the Christian scheme was completed, and began to be put in practice, such as it was to continue to the end of the world. On that day the Holy Spirit first descended, and took upon Himself the guidance and governance of God's people ; so fulfilling the declaration of God, in which He had said that He would be their God, and they should be His people, in a manner different from any that had been known before. On that day the heaven was opened, and from thenceforward the angels of God have been continually ascending and descending on the sons of men. Strange indeed it is, and one of the most striking proofs of the state in which we are living, that of all the great festivals of the Church, this, perhaps, ranks in common opinion as one of the least important ; because the world cannot receive the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost ; ' because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him.'



We are accustomed, indeed, to talk of the descent of the Holy Ghost on the Apostles as of one of the striking miracles of the Gospel ; the gift of tongues, and the other miraculous powers which were then conferred, may interest us, perhaps, as a very wonderful event ; nay, we may talk also of the ordinary gifts of the Spirit, and of the necessity of being born again by His influence, and yet we may not understand fully what was the great change in the condition of mankind, which was, as it were, on this day begun, or what is the full meaning of the expression, that we are now living under the dispensation of the Spirit. The subject, indeed, is far too vast to be properly treated of in a single sermon ; but I may just touch on some of the principal points of it ; and thankful shall I be if what I shall say may be the means, with God's blessing, of making any man better understand the terms under which he is living, and learn to value the last and most abiding promise of our Lord, that the Comforter should remain with us for ever.

I have said before, and it is a thing very necessary to be borne in mind when we are reading the Scriptures, that many blessings which are there spoken of as of the highest kind, and as tending to produce the greatest and happiest changes in the state of the world, have, in fact, never been brought fairly into exercise, on account of the neglect with which men have received them. And the consequence of this has been, that things which are spoken of in the Scriptures as being come to an end, as being from henceforth useless, and to be held of no account, are and ever have been continued, and we could not at this moment safely do without them. In short, we must take the whole picture of Christianity, as we find it in the New Testament, together. If our lives answer to the goodness and holiness there described, then we may expect also to see those things done away which to men so good and so

holy would be no longer needful, and to feel and duly enjoy those blessings which are promised as the natural fruit of Christ's Gospel. But if our lives are not Christian, but Jewish or heathen, then what was required for Jews and heathens may be still needful to us, and we cannot wonder if we do not taste the blessings which were promised to a very different set of persons than ourselves.

The design, then, of the Christian dispensation, if I may so speak, is by far the most noble, is the most glorious display of the wisdom, and the power, and the goodness of God, that it is possible, I suppose, for our minds to conceive. It was truly a new creation, to make men more than they had ever been before, since the entrance of sin into the world: to re-create them after the image of God that they might for ever be with God. And to bring them into this state Christ died; that by His blood all past sins being washed out, they might be looked upon by God as new born in perfect innocence, as ready to run unstained and un-incumbered the glorious race that was set before them. So then, when the resurrection of Christ had declared that the sacrifice of His death was accepted, that the sins of all the world were taken away, that to all their past evil, men were in a manner become dead,—then the time was come when they were to enter upon their new life; and being now placed, as it were, the second time within the gates of the garden of Eden, God declared Himself to them once more, as their guide, their supporter, and their friend, that they should cultivate it, and bring forth the fruits of it.

Thus, to take a comparison from another part of the Scripture, when the redemption of the Israelites out of Egypt had been effected, when they had been delivered out of the house of bondage, and the marks of their former slavery were gone; that same God who had led them in the pillar of fire and of a cloud, bare them on eagles'

wings, and brought them to Himself: He brought them to Himself at Mount Sinai, that being now redeemed by Him as His own, and the former bondage being done away with, He might prepare them for their future course, and reveal Himself and His will to them more fully than He had ever done before.

The day of Pentecost was that day on which the redeemed Israelites stood before their God when He came down to them on Mount Sinai: it was the fiftieth day after their departure out of Egypt. On that self-same day of Pentecost the redeemed disciples of Christ were all with one accord in one place, when their God came down to them also, to give them His law, and to reveal Himself to them more fully than He had ever done before to man.

Hitherto, then, all is alike; and now we come to the difference. The law given on Mount Sinai was written on tables of stone: the display of God's power was sensible, and might be seen and heard; and the mark that God continued with His people was the visible cloud that covered the tabernacle. But of the new law God Himself declares, that He puts it in our minds, and writes it in our hearts; and instead of any sensible mark of His presence, instead of frequent miracles, and the abiding glory on the tabernacle, there are the fruits of His blessed presence,—spiritual fruits produced by the most holy and eternal Father of spirits; peace, love, joy, the enlightened mind, and the willing heart, the image of the glory of God as displayed in the person of Jesus Christ.

And to suit so perfect a revelation, and so effectual a presence of God among us, all was to be disposed accordingly. Miracles were to expire, and prophecies were to cease; there was no outward sign of God's presence with His Church to be seen, that so we might the better remember where alone to look for Him, making His abode with us in our hearts. Forms and rites, useful in training

those who were not yet come to their full age in Christ, were from henceforth to expire; the old written law was to lose its force, as superseded by a still holier and more perfect law within us. And not one nation also, but all the children of God that were everywhere scattered abroad, were now to be called into the kingdom of their Father. When the temple was at Jerusalem, men from the extremities of the earth could scarcely go up thither to worship. But when the temple of God was in the heart of every man, when we were each man a living temple by the Spirit,—then not on the mountain of Samaria, nor yet at Jerusalem, but in the isles of the uttermost sea, from one end of the earth unto the other, the true worshippers should worship the Father in spirit and in truth; Christ is all and in all, and we are all the children of God in Christ Jesus.

Such were to have been the fruits of the Gospel: and most fearful is it to think how very imperfectly they have in reality been produced in the world. But what I think will be most now to our benefit, will be to consider how far we each of us as individuals may turn to our own profit the blessings which were, as on this day, given; and how we may best for ourselves strive to show our sense of the manifold goodness of God.

And first we ought to get rid of that feeling which I believe is very common, and the more so in proportion as people are more ignorant and superstitious; the feeling of regret that miracles are over; a desire like that of the Jews to see a sign from heaven: a sort of notion that the patriarchs and prophets were more favoured by God than we are, and that He revealed himself more to them than to us. This, which in some is only regret, is in others something of murmuring and unbelief. ‘Where is the promise of Christ’s coming?’ it asks; ‘for since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from

the beginning of the world.' And unquestionably most of us would be very glad to see some miracle now, and would think that the promises of the Gospel would be greatly confirmed if one were now in these latter days to rise from the dead.

It is certain, however, that all these feelings arise out of an ignorance of the glorious state in which we are now actually placed. Over the eyes of the Israelites, says St. Paul, there was a veil which would not let them see to the end of their own revelation; 'but we all,' says he, 'with open face, beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord.' And it is of these latter days only, that God says, 'They shall teach no more every man his neighbour and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord: for all shall know me, from the least to the greatest.' And again, 'I will be their God, and they shall be my people; and they shall be my sons and daughters,' saith the Lord Almighty. All these passages, and many more, speak of the state of Christians as one much more favoured, as one of greater nearness to God, than had ever been known before. And what is our Lord's promise? 'If any man love me he will keep my words, and my Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our abode with him.' In fact, if we think a little, miracles are a sign not to them who believe, but to them who believe not; they are marks of the power of God, like the whirlwind, and the earthquake, and the fire which went before the Lord, when He appeared to Elijah the prophet in Horeb. But we are told that the Lord was neither in the whirlwind, nor in the earthquake, nor in the fire; but in the still small voice that followed them. Now to us, my brethren, the whirlwind, and the earthquake, and the fire, are shown no longer; we have only the still small voice within us. Have we then God less near to us

than if we had the more striking and sensible, but less effectual marks of His presence? On the contrary, if that still small voice speaks to us more plainly than it ever did to the prophets or patriarchs; if our understandings are more enlightened and our views of duty higher; if, in short, the life of a good Christian be a better life than ever has been or can be led by anyone else, then have we God more near to us than He has ever been to any other men; we have something better than signs of His power, since His Spirit has revealed to us His goodness and His wisdom.

When, therefore, we would fain see some sign of God, we must not, like the heathen or the Jew, be looking out for a miracle: we may turn to Him in prayer, and prepare a place for Him in our hearts, which He will fill with His Spirit, that is, with Himself. The sign that He is there, is in every instance that we give of subdued lust or passion, in every more lively desire after Him and heavenly things, in every clearer view that we gain of the truth, in every warmer feeling of love to God and man, and in every act of our daily duty, better and more cheerfully performed. ‘The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit.’ If we would but look upon every improvement in our lives and hearts, as on the seal and mark of God’s presence within us, how little room would there be for that lonely feeling with which some measure as it were the distance from earth to heaven, and think that since Jesus ascended up on high they are left here as if to weep over the grave where He is to be found no longer. O slow of heart to believe all that Jesus Himself has spoken! Did He not say that He would not leave us comfortless, but would come unto us? Did He not say that it was expedient for us that He should go away, that so the Com-

forter might come to us? And how is it that while communing with that Comforter daily, while subduing our faults and improving in holiness through His grace, our eyes are yet holden that we do not know Him; and we still repeat as it were the words of Mary, 'They have taken away my Lord out of the sepulchre, and I know not where they have laid him?'

But this is not all; there are others, and, I fear, far more in number, who know not that God is so near them, and profane His living temple, their bodies, souls, and spirits, with the most horrible sacrilege. 'Grieve not the Holy Spirit of God,' is the exhortation used by the Apostle, as the strongest argument against sin. If we should think it shocking to make the walls of this holy place ring with blasphemy, or with the words of riot and uncleanness: if we should shudder at the thought of going to that holy table as to our common meals; to go there in hypocrisy, or with no serious thought of God and of our own souls;—then should we shudder and think it shocking to live as too many of us do live; using evil words in a place as holy, whenever we do use them, and despising the presence of God as much as when we draw near to eat of the body and blood of Christ. For the Holy Spirit is within us; and we cannot escape the guilt of sacrilege in every evil thing that we think, or say, or do; we cannot hinder every sin that we commit from being a profanation of the temple of God. Every means of grace neglected, every clearer light left unimproved, every warning of conscience unheeded, is an act of profaneness and contempt of the Holy Spirit within us, whose presence we are slighting, and thwarting His merciful endeavours to do us good. And yet if a vision from the other world were to appear to any of us, the most hardened man alive would fear to sin in its presence: and this, though it were no more than the spirit of a man, which in its own day on earth had

itself been compassed with sins and infirmities. But in the presence of the Holy Spirit of God, who is dwelling in us to do us good, we do not scruple to commit any wickedness. This is indeed unbelief; God is in this place, and we know it not; He declares that He is in our hearts, and we give no heed to His words; nay, sometimes we think it folly and extravagance to believe them. But that is superstition which leads to some wickedness, or to some foolishness in our practice: such as faith in the promises of God revealed to us in the Scripture will never lead to. That is no superstition which teaches us that the Father of spirits influences the spirits that He has made; that the God who redeemed us watches over the souls that He has purchased; that the Author and Giver of all holiness and goodness is present to inspire and to bless everything holy, good, and wise, in us His creatures; and that He is dishonoured and profaned by every thought, or word, or deed, of evil. That, in short, is no superstition, which in proportion as it is more firmly believed makes us wiser and better, and in proportion as it is disbelieved or slighted, lets us fall back surely into thoughts and actions the most unbecoming God's reasonable and spiritual creatures.



## SERMON XXX.

*THE TEMPTATIONS BESETTING A USEFUL LIFE.*

LUKE X. 20.

*In this rejoice not, that the spirits are subject unto you ; but rather rejoice because your names are written in heaven.*

THE temptations which beset different men, or the same men at different periods of life, are, as we know, exceedingly different. There is a sort of regular order of them, in which they attack the Christian character in its earlier, and in its more advanced stages ; and this order is well shown in the history of the three temptations to which our Lord was exposed, as it is related by St. Luke. These three temptations answer to the three great enemies of our souls, the flesh, the world, and the devil. The first of these attacks by far the greatest number of persons ; for all, one may say, are exposed to it at one part of their lives, and a great many are subject to it during all their days. Then comes the world, which is also an universal tempter to the richer and higher classes of society during the prime of their lives ; going on with them to their last years of old age. Last of all, are those temptations which are called more particularly the temptations of the Devil ; not as if he did not tempt us through the enticements of the flesh and the world, but because this last class form as it were his choicest weapons, and those with which he

gains his proudest victories ; the temptations by which he too often overcomes those who have resisted the flesh and the world, and who to human judgment are amongst the highest and noblest of their kind.

It is to these temptations that our Lord alludes, when He says, ‘ In this rejoice not, that the spirits are subject unto you.’ The words were addressed to His seventy disciples, whom He had sent out to preach the coming of the kingdom of God, and to labour in His service. They returned again with joy, saying, ‘ Lord, even the devils are subject unto us through thy name.’ What they said was no more than the truth : they *had* advanced the kingdom of Christ, and lessened that of Satan ; and their Lord acknowledged it by saying, ‘ I beheld Satan as lightning fall from heaven.’ And He rewarded them by increasing their powers of labouring in His service, by granting to them greater gifts than those which they had enjoyed before ; ‘ Behold, I give unto you power to tread on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy ; and nothing shall by any means hurt you.’ It was the reward given by the king in the parable to that good and faithful servant whose pound had gained ten pounds ; he gave him authority over ten cities, that he might there have larger means of usefulness : ‘ To every one that hath shall be given.’ But at the same time that He rewarded them, He gave them a caution to beware of the temptations with which Satan would assault them in the very midst of their well-doing ; ‘ In this rejoice not, that the spirits are subject unto you ; but rather rejoice because your names are written in heaven.’ The words, ‘ rather rejoice,’ tell us exactly how we are to understand the first part of the verse, ‘ in this rejoice not, because the spirits are subject unto you.’ It was not wrong in them to rejoice in the gifts which their Lord had given ; or that they had been enabled to use them effectually to His

service. Nay, 'he that reapeth' in such a field 'receiveth wages, and gathereth fruit unto life eternal; that both he that soweth and he that reapeth may rejoice together.' They might rejoice in this; but yet they must rejoice with trembling. Great gifts only make their possessor more deeply answerable for the use of them; and the honour of being the happy instrument in the hand of Christ in doing His will, may make us forget that we are no more than instruments, and may weaken our own sense of dependence upon our head, and fountain of spiritual life. 'Rather rejoice because your names are written in heaven.' In the thought of God's gifts to them, and of their success in using them, they might rejoice, but it must not be too freely; but in the thought of God's free mercy to them, of the everlasting kingdom which He had prepared for them from the beginning of the world, through Him who was 'slain from the beginning of the world,'—in that they might rejoice safely; it would fill them, not with dangerous pride, but with a humbling and softening love; it was the joy of the Holy Ghost shed abroad in their hearts by the Spirit of Christ their Saviour.

Now then we must have seen ere this, how the words of Christ apply to ourselves. Are we casting out devils in His name? that is, are we striving to advance His kingdom in good and useful works, to the bodies and souls of our neighbours? Does our employment and its success fill our hearts with joy; so that we can say, 'Lord! even the devils are subject unto us through thy name?' Then let us beware and take heed to ourselves of our Lord's most timely warning. 'In this rejoice not, because the devils are subject unto you; but rather rejoice because your names are written in heaven.' Let not our joy be in ourselves, but in Christ our Redeemer. Through Him our names are written in heaven, and not through any the

best deeds of our own. Let us rejoice safely that He is at the right hand of God to make intercession for us, and that through Him we have an entrance into that most holy place whither He our High Priest has passed in by the sacrifice of Himself.

It well shows how much we always require to remember Christ's command, to watch and pray lest we enter into temptation, that even our very duties may be a snare to us; and we may be falling away from the path of life, even when we seem to others and to ourselves to be following it most steadily. This concerns all those who are engaged in promoting works of charity, and, most of all, who are labouring to do good to their neighbour in the great business of his soul, and who therefore may be inclined to think that they are employed most securely. It concerns too every man who is busily and honestly engaged in his regular calling; who living in the fear of God, is making his work a godly service; and who doing good in his generation, is setting forward the kingdom of Christ; and is so far casting out devils in his Master's name. We cannot deny to such a man the joy of a good conscience; we cannot deny him the pleasure of being a willing servant of Christ: nay, might it not be said that this is the joy which Christ promised to His disciples; a joy which no man taketh from them? No; we cannot forbid them to rejoice that the devils are subject to them; but we would say to them in the words of their Saviour, 'Rather rejoice because your names are written in heaven.' Draw off your thoughts from yourselves and your own works, to Christ and to what He has done for you. It will save you from every danger that might accompany your joy, and increase the joy itself tenfold. Let us see then how this is to be done, and what it is that the spirit of Christ's words recommends to us.

Every one can easily understand, that a man may give

away a great deal of money, and give it very judiciously, so as to do a great deal of good, and yet that he may possibly do it for the sake of worldly fame, or from some other improper motive, which shall hinder him from receiving any reward from Christ at the last day. It is easy, therefore, to see, that our lives may be very useful, that we may be casting out devils in Christ's name; and yet that our own names all the while may not be written in heaven. But we may go farther than this; and say, that even when a man is labouring to do good for Christ's sake, and therefore with no improper motive, but with a very good one, he may fall into a very dangerous state, which will in time lower his motives and relax his practice, thus proving that it is an evil tree which brings forth such evil fruit. He falls into this state by forgetting the words of Christ; 'Abide in me, and I in you; as the branch cannot bring forth fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine, no more can ye except ye abide in me;' and again, 'Without me you can do nothing.' He abides in us by His Holy Spirit, and without that Holy Spirit of Christ we can do nothing that shall fit our souls for heaven.

It were a great injury to the sense of Christ's words, to suppose that when He said, 'Abide in me,' He meant no more than if He had said, 'Keep my commandments.' There is all this difference, that by telling us to abide in Him, He tells us to do that which will alone enable us to keep His commandments. The way so to abide in Him, and to procure His Spirit to abide in us, is by an earnest and constant prayer. Most unwisely does he reckon who thinks that his devotions are really kept up while he is doing God's will; and that it is less necessary for him to give up his time to especial acts of prayer and meditation. I would not be understood to speak of hypocrites; or of those fond and fanciful persons who would pray and meditate only, but never act; but I would say to him who is

not trying to cheat God and his own soul, who really is anxious to do the will of his heavenly Father, and to set forward the kingdom of God,—that no time will be less lost to him than that which he passes in direct communion with God and Christ by prayer and devout meditation. This is to feed on Christ, to feed on Him as our bread of life; to eat His flesh and drink His blood, which is meat indeed, and drink indeed.

We are so formed that we cannot even work in the most useful calling long together without finding our spiritual state go backwards, unless we often go to Christ the fountain of life, and refresh ourselves with His spirit. We look back on a day usefully spent with a natural pleasure: the general impression which it leaves on our minds is one of satisfaction; and the good that we may have left undone, the cold or proud or selfish feeling which may have risen within our hearts in the course of that day, do not strike us with any concern. But these are weeds, which, if not constantly checked, will soon overspread the ground most mischievously. Another day is spent in the same useful employment; again the mind is satisfied; and again the evil that has arisen within us is unnoticed and unrepented of. Thus it gains strength insensibly, while our feelings of confidence and satisfaction with ourselves are all the while more confirmed. It is not that our conduct in life in those great points which alone are noticed by other men, is soon affected by this inward decay; we are still no less diligent, no less upright, no less desirous to do good in our calling. But in little points, scarce seen but by Him to whom all hearts are open, there is a change; we grow prouder, and colder, and harder; more selfish or neglectful of others in little things; less anxious about the welfare of our brethren's souls; less grieved at sin in ourselves and others; less full of the love of Christ. I once heard of a clergyman

who, when the communion was going to be administered in his own church, asked a friend to undertake that duty for him; for that he was engaged to attend to the distribution of money in some benefit club, of which he was a principal manager; and he excused himself by saying, that ‘God loved mercy rather than sacrifice.’ Now in this particular case, it might perhaps have been necessary for him to act so from some circumstances which he could not disregard: but certainly this is the sort of way in which a going backward in holiness would be likely to show itself: and although it is very true that mercy is more than sacrifice, yet with regard to our Christian services of prayer and communion, I should expect that he who loved them best, would also best love mercy; and that he whose love to God was less fervent, would soon find his love to man grow cold also.

But, if whilst busily engaged in the duties of our station, whilst casting out devils, as I may say, in Christ’s name, we take some portion of time in every day, not for formal prayers but for a real pouring out of our hearts before God, for searching into the faults of our souls, for refreshing our sense of our own weakness, and our love and gratitude to Christ our Saviour; for throwing ourselves wholly upon Him for aid to keep us in perfect peace and holiness; for fixing our minds, in short, on those things which most concern us,—God, and our own souls, and death, and that which comes after death,—then we may have that higher joy to which Christ bids us rather look, that our names are written in heaven; and we shall pursue our daily duties besides with a more active and lively, as well as with a humbler spirit; working with fear and trembling, because of our own infinite frailty; yet with a hope stronger than our fear, because of Him who worketh in us, our Saviour and our God.

Let us treat then as one of the devil’s worst snares, the

temptation which we may feel to trust in our own useful lives and virtuous feelings, and therefore to neglect coming to God ; that is, to neglect the only means of knowing ourselves thoroughly, and thus of obtaining a cure for every weakness of our souls, and a guard to save us from falling away, through the Spirit of Christ our Saviour. We know how little our bodies could do their work, if we were to deny them time to take their sufficient food : and it is a yet more foolish economy to deny our souls time for theirs, and yet to require or expect that they should work still as healthfully and actively. Christ Himself, whose day was spent in active usefulness, was accustomed to rise long before it was day, that He might commence with His heavenly Father. In this, as in all the rest of His life, He was our example that we should follow His steps ; and if He, to whom the Spirit was given without measure, did not neglect the means of gaining fresh spiritual strength by prayer and devout meditation, how can we neglect it, without being certain that we shall suffer for our presumption ?

END OF THE FIRST VOLUME.





